

Human Rights Commission February 25, 2004 Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Preston Bass, David Finke, Mike Blum , Kylar Broadus, Val Snell-Smith, Lawrence Morganfield III, and Dee Campbell-Carter.

Staff Present: Phil Steinhaus, Nanette Ward, Fred Boeckmann, Karlla Philpot

Special Item: The meeting of the Human Rights Commission began at 6:30 p.m. with the showing of a video titled, “*No Dumb Questions.*” Commissioner Broadus made arrangements to show the video which portrayed how a family responded when one of the males in the family recognized that he better identified his gender as female and began living his life as a female. The video addressed this subject in a very sensitive manner and showed the reactions of the other family members in the life of the transgendered person. A brief discussion of the video followed and commission members thanked Broadus for sharing the video.

- I. **Call to Order/Introductions:** Following the video, Bass called the meeting to order and introductions were made.
- II. **Approval of the Agenda:** A motion was made by Finke to approve the agenda as written. The motion was seconded by Broadus and passed by a unanimous vote.
- III. **Approval of 1/28/04 Meeting Minutes:** Blum made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Second by Broadus. The motion was approved by a unanimous vote.
- IV. **Old Business:**

- A. **Community Study Circle Program Report:** Ward reported on the “Community Circle” which was held on January 29 at the library. This is a new extension of the Community Study Circles Program which invites past study circle participants and other community members to engage in single-evening dialogue sessions around various topics. Thirty-five people attended the program. Ward shared that there were many new faces including high school students and eight volunteer facilitators. She handed out comments from participants. The responses were very positive. Morganfield said it was a very positive experience and that his children really enjoyed participating. Ward added that she thought it was very successful and said that the next one is scheduled for tomorrow night. She shared articles that were used as “discussion starters.”

Ward also reported that she attended the annual city volunteer reception where study circle volunteers were recognized for having contributed over 1,000 volunteer hours in 2003.

❖ Ward also shared the following other program highlights:

❖ Hickman High School will have another student study circle in the fall and that MU will have a faculty study circle in April.

❖ A Columbia College student has participated in the study circle program and is

being trained as a volunteer facilitator with the goal of having other Columbia College students participate in the study circles program as a way of enhancing their volunteer work with Field Elementary School through the Partners In Education program.

- ❖ An Master's level student in the MU Truman School of Public Affairs is working to organize a college student study circle on March 14 at the MU Black Culture Center.

- ❖ The Columbia Channel has just finished taping a new study circles video which includes many new participants. The new video will run on the City Channel in March.

- ❖ March 18 and April 15 are the dates for the next planned Community Circles.

- ❖ April 16 is the registration deadline for the May 1 and 2 community-wide Study Circle program. Ward passed out information cards about the program.

Bass thanked Ward for doing an excellent job with the program.

B. Impediments to Fair Housing Choice Committee: Finke reported that the report is nearly completed. Steinhaus said the committee will complete the report sometime in March. The committee will present the report at the commission's April meeting. The committee has been looking at housing costs, loans, and other impediments to fair housing.

C. Discussion of the "USA-PATRIOT Act": Bass thanked Finke and Blum for additional information they provided. Finke explained that the sub-committee was unable to meet due to unavoidable conflicts. He distributed copies of an e-mail that he had sent out earlier today. Finke reviewed the highlights of his e-mail.

Finke asked Steinhaus and Boeckmann to comment on City Council discussion regarding information that was shared with the City Council from the last commission meeting. Boeckmann said the information was shared with the City Council and became a report to the City Council. Boeckmann reported to the City Council that the commission would report back to the City Council before taking further action.

Finke shared that he feels the commission is empowered by ordinance to hold public hearings and added that he would like to work collaboratively with the City Council on this issue.

Blum said he doesn't want to fight with the City Council and would like to see the commission make recommendations to the City Council. He also feels that the commission has a right to hold public hearings. He asked if the commission should get feedback from the community before advising the City Council.

Finke said he believes the commission should find out the concerns of the community.

Blum asked Boeckmann if the City Council should approve the commission's

request to hold a public hearing on the issue.

Boeckmann said at the last City Council meeting he told the City Council that the commission would report to the City Council before proceeding.

Bass said that the commission has an opportunity now to share reasons with the City Council why the "USA-PATRIOT Act" is an important issue for our community to discuss.

Steinhaus asked Blum if he was concerned about sharing information on the issue with the City Council. Blum said his concern was that the City Council might reject the commission's concerns.

Campbell-Carter said she thought it was the commission's plan to report to the City Council about the commission's concerns.

Finke said he wants to gather more information from the community on the impact of the act but doesn't want to alienate the City Council in the process. He would like to prepare a report to the City Council and ask to discuss the issue with them in person.

Blum said he thought it was appropriate to go to the City Council with information about the act and that if the City Council wants to hold hearings on the issue, that would be acceptable to him as well.

Broadus made the following motion: "Finke and Blum are to move forward with a report to the City Council on why gathering community input on the "USA-PATRIOT Act" is important. The report should include a request for the Human Rights Commission to meet with the City Council in person. The report should also include what information is currently available on how local citizens might be affected." The motion was seconded by Campbell-Carter. All present voted in favor of the motion.

V. New Business:

- A. Alternatives to Violence Program – 2003 Final Report:** Steinhaus passed around a copy of the final report on the program which the commission provided funding support for in 2003. He reported that they had reached out to the African-American community and youth in the Fun City program. Campbell-Carter said it was a wonderful program and staff and that they had done great outreach in the community.
- B. New Commission Appointments:** Steinhaus reported that Marie Glaze and Glenn Glasgow have been appointed to three-year terms on the commission.

VI. Staff Reports:

- A. Community Services:** Steinhaus mentioned information that was included in commissioner folders including and upcoming lecture at Columbia College by Arun Gandhi; a newspaper article on a state proposal to amend the state

constitution to ban gay marriages, an article from the *Columbia Daily Tribune* entitled, "The Color of Justice" and two articles related to consideration of the "USA-PATRIOT Act" by the City Council of Lawrence, Kansas.

B. Law Department: No report.

C. Investigator/Community Educator: Ward reported improved communication with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). She said that our relationship and information sharing is continuing to improve with them. She shared that the EEOC has a quick interview and intake process. They often will make a determination on whether to proceed in an initial two hour interview. During the interview process, they will decide to whether to investigate the complaint, to administratively close the complaint or issue a "right to sue" letter. She added that the Missouri Commission on Human Rights (MCHR) has a work sharing agreement with the EEOC and that they will generally accept EEOC decisions if the EEOC is the first agency to receive the complaint of discrimination.

Snell-Smith shared a personal story about herself and her son Huston going to K-Mart. She said that when they went in the store the alarm sounded just as a white man was exiting. The white man said, "I didn't buy anything" and the security guard told him to "go on." Later, her son Huston walked out to the car while Snell-Smith was in the check-out line. When he went out of the door, the alarm sounded and he was searched by the security guard even though he too had not purchased anything. The security guard would not let him get Snell-Smith who was in the check-out line. The security guard did not find anything on Huston. Huston was wearing steel-toed boots and had other metal items on him that perhaps triggered the alarm. Snell-Smith and Huston questioned why Huston was searched while the white man was not searched earlier when the same thing happened. Snell-Smith said her son Huston felt very humiliated by the incident.

Ward asked to "check-in" with the commission regarding her community education efforts. She said she likes to "check-in" from time-to-time to make sure the commission feels that her efforts are having a positive effect in the community. She said that the study circles program takes a lot of effort and wanted to make sure she is addressing what the commission wants to be addressed.

Campbell-Carter said she thought the Study Circles Program is very beneficial. Broadus agreed. He added that he thought the Police Department also needed to conduct sensitivity training with police officers. Blum added that he thought the study circles are the best thing to come out of the commission. Campbell-Carter added that she would like to encourage more youth to attend the program and that many are afraid to speak out about discrimination and race relation issues.

VII. Closed Session to Discuss Pending Cases: Broadus made a motion to go into closed session to discuss pending cases of discrimination. The motion was seconded by Finke. A roll call vote was taken. Bass-Yes, Blum-Yes, Finke-Yes, Broadus-Yes, Snell-Smith-Yes, Morganfield-Yes, Campbell-Carter-Yes.

Finke moved to go out of closed session. The motion was seconded by Broadus. A roll call vote was taken. Bass-Yes, Blum-Yes, Finke-Yes, Broadus-Yes, Snell-Smith-Yes, Morganfield-Yes, Campbell-Carter-Yes.

VIII. Public Comment: None.

IX. Commissioner Comments: Bass reported that he discussed the commission's concerns with the owner of the Coliseum Bistro and Stumpy Joe Pete's Sports Bar. The owner said his idea for "Stumpy Joe Pete's" came from the movie "Spinal Tap" and that the menu item the "Tomahawk Chop" was used because of the sports theme of their restaurant. Bass said he felt he made the owner aware that both of these terms were offensive as they promoted stereotypes.

Bass also shared correspondence he had received. Columbia LGBT Coalition will hold their 2nd annual chili supper on 2/28/04 from 6-8:30 p.m. at the Parkade Plaza and that everyone is invited to attend.

He also shared that he had attended the Parkade Elementary School banquet for the Black History Month Job Shadowing Program and that they had put together a nice video about the program which also recognized the commission's financial support of the program.

He also shared a letter from Mayor Hindman thanking the commission for their continued support of the Columbia Values Diversity Celebration.

Broadus expressed appreciation to the commission for working with him as this was his last meeting as a commission member. He encouraged the commission to keep its conscience and to keep up the good work currently being done by the commission.

Bass also thanked all commission members for their support and work as this too was his last meeting as a commission member. He echoed Broadus' comments and thanked Broadus for educating the commission about transgender issues. He reiterated sincere appreciation to the commission and said he thought the commission has done positive things for our community. He also expressed thanks to a fine staff. He said Boeckmann and Ward do a great job and that Philpot is wonderful. He thanked Steinhaus for his good work with the commission.

All commission members expressed their sincere thanks to Bass and Broadus for their work on the commission.

X. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Phil Steinhaus, Manager
Office of Community Services