

**Human Right Commission
September 1, 2009 Meeting Minutes**

Members Present: Mary Bixby, Glenn Glasgow, Jessica Macy, Al Terrill, Mark Thomas, Marissa Todd

Members Excused: Negar Jackson

Staff Present: Steve Hollis, Marie Glaze, Shawna Victor, Fred Boeckmann

Others Present:

- I. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.
- II. **Approval of Agenda:** Bixby moved to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Terrill and passed unanimously.
- III. **Approval of July 7, 2009 meeting minutes:** Glasgow moved to approve the July 7, 2009 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Bixby and passed unanimously.
- IV. **Old Business:** There was no old business.
- V. **New Business**

- A. **Appointment of Human Rights Commissioner to the Citizens Police Review Board:** Thomas asked if there is any wording in the ordinance regarding how the Human Right Commission representative should be selected. Boeckmann said there is no wording about that in the ordinance.

Boeckmann noted there will be a lot of work involved at the front end as there will be trainings and presentations by the Police and other city departments. This will be to educate the board on police procedures and different issues that would be involved with the work of the board.

Thomas asked if this is a one year appointment. Boeckmann said that is correct.

Hollis said other commissions make these type of appointments when the officers are elected. Boeckmann said he believes Council appointments will be made in October. This commission could make their appointment be longer than one year to coincide with the term expirations.

Thomas said the commission could make the appointment be for one year from the date the appointment is approved then if questions or other issues, such as a commissioner resigning, then the commission would handle the vacancy at that time.

Hollis asked when the first Citizens Police Review Board meeting will be held. Bockmann said he believes it will be in November.

Bixby said she would like to wait to see what Jackson's thoughts are on who she believes should be appointed or if she would like to be appointed. If Jackson is not interested, Bixby would nominate Thomas.

Thomas asked if anyone has spoken with Jackson about this issue. No one indicated they had spoken with her. Hollis stated that Jackson may not be interested at this time as she is beginning a new job and will have a heavy work load but he has not spoken with her about this.

Thomas thanked Bixby for the consideration. He noted he strongly believes in the Citizen Police Review Board but understands there will be a lot of scrutiny. This would not be an appointment for someone who is shy. This should be a position that is rotated amongst the commissioners.

Bixby asked if Thomas would have the time to attend the Citizen Police Review Board meetings. Thomas said he is happy the Council created this board and appreciative Boeckmann included a Human Rights Commission representative on the board.

Boeckmann said the training period will be time intensive initially. Beyond that, the amount of time that will be spent on the board will depend on the number of complaints that are brought before the board.

Todd asked if the other appointments to the board have one year terms. Boeckmann said there will be staggered terms initially but the terms will be three year terms.

Todd asked if there will be training for new board members. Boeckmann said this is a board that will have continuous training for all members.

Thomas asked Macy what her thoughts were on this board. Macy said she did not know enough to really have an opinion. She believes this is a good thing for the community to have. She asked what the Citizen Police Review Board's responsibilities will be. Boeckmann said the board's main duty will be to review appeals from the police chief's decision. The appeal could come from the police officer involved or the citizen who made the complaint. There are other duties, such as giving advice to the police chief and city manager on police department policies.

Thomas said for many years, there has been public interest in having a police review board. The idea had been deemed unnecessary. Then there were a few incidents in the community that raised the interest of numerous groups that made a big push for the City Council to create this board. Council then created a committee to review the topic.

Bixby noted Council also hired an outside consultant to review the situation and make recommendations. The consultant previously was a teacher in the community. Boeckmann said the consultant was hired to review the police department's internal affairs.

Terrill asked how long the review board has been in existence. Boeckmann said it was just created last month and no one has been appointed at this time. Glaze noted the deadline for the public to apply is Friday, September 4, 2009.

Macy asked who would be interested in serving on the board. Terrill said he is interested but is unsure if he has the time.

Bixby said the person who is appointed should be the equivalent of a good jury member. They should have an open mind, suspend disbelief and view everything in an even light.

Terrill asked how many members will be on the board. Boeckmann said there will be nine.

Thomas asked if the police chief will be a member. Boeckmann said there will not be

a police representative of the board but the police chief will attend the meetings as needed.

Thomas said there are many people in the community that have fought on behalf of this board for many years. This is not a new idea. This board is based on other successful boards across the country.

Terrill said he knows there are many people in this community that wanted this board.

Macy said the board she works for will give her advice on what should be done. She can choose whether or not to take that advice but when the public outcry gets loud enough that she has not done her job, the board is the one that begins the fervor of change. She does not know if that will be the intent of the Citizens Police Review Board, but when citizens are involved in internal workings, the board becomes the voice for doing the right thing.

Bixby asked how much power this board will have. Boeckmann said he believes there will be power as the police will be aware there are civilians looking over their shoulder and will impact how they act. Also, when cases come to the board, the board can make recommendations to change city policy.

Terrill asked if the commissioner appointed to the board will be able to report back to this commission or if the board meetings will be confidential. Boeckmann said they will be as open as possible under the sunshine law. There will be some times when portions of the meeting will have to be closed, such as when dealing with a juvenile.

Bixby asked if the board will have set meeting times or just meet as needed. Boeckmann said he believes there will be both.

Hollis said there can be a standing report on the agenda for a report from the appointed member.

Macy asked if it would be appropriate for the chair of this commission to also serve as appointed member to the Citizen Police Review Board, as a shared responsibility, to make sure someone is on the board.

Thomas said he would be willing to appoint Terrill to the board. Thomas said he believes there will be more people who apply for the board that are Caucasian. Given the history in this community between African-American residents and the police, Thomas believes Terrill's presence on the board would have more of an impact.

Terrill said he has lived in cities such as Baltimore, Dallas, and Kansas City, and sees many of the same problems that happened in these cities beginning to happen in Columbia. A lot of the issues that are a problem are the issues that are not discussed in the media. He believes this board can play a major roll because the more eyes that are on something, there can be good that comes out of that.

Hollis said the commission does not have to decide this evening.

The commission agreed to table this decision to the October meeting.

- B. W.K. Kellogg Foundation Grant: “Field Building and Developing the Capacity for Sustainability of Community-Based Racial Healing & Racial Equity Efforts”:** Thomas said the University Chancellor’s Diversity Initiative will be writing a proposal, in response to the Kellogg Foundation, for community work that is centered on the theme of racial healing. The proposal guidelines call for the promotion of racial healing, mitigation of the effects of structural racism, and help eliminate institutionalized structural racism.

Thomas said foundations are great optimists and believe by putting out their philanthropy on behalf of good causes that they can make a difference in the world.

There will be collaborations between the City Human Rights staff and University staff who are working on this proposal, such as the MU Theatre Department. He believes the approach that will be used will be to appeal to youth in schools, on the streets and in churches. They are hoping to get 30-40 high school students to participate in a process of discussing race in creative ways, such as through Slam Poetry or interactive theatre. The process will be filmed for a documentary and then introduce a dialogue with city officials such as curfew and police relations.

They are also hoping this documentary will be available at a future True/False Film Festival.

Bixby noted two of those involved are from the University’s Theatre Department. Thomas listed other people that will possibly be involved in the process.

Thomas said this will be a great way for the University to get involved with making connections with community programs.

Bixby said this will be a way for the community and the University to be proactive.

Thomas said there is a possibility of including some funding for this commission to continue their educational outreach programs. If awarded, the grant is \$400,000 over a two year period.

Terrill said in his work with the Department of Natural Resources, he has seen that race is still a very sensitive subject for many to discuss. This could be a great program to help open up that dialogue for the community.

Thomas noted he will have an update at the October meeting.

- C. FY2010 Human Rights Enhancement Program Funding and Process:** Hollis said the FY2010 Human Rights Enhancement Program Funding applications are now available. There will be an informational meeting September 9 at 4:00 p.m. Proposals are due on September 25. The commission will conduct a worksession, hold public hearings and make preliminary funding recommendations on October 27.

Hollis said \$2,500 is in the proposed budget. This is approximately half the amount the commission received last year. The commission can go to Council to express their concerns over the funds being cut. The commission can go as a group, commissioners can speak as individual residence, or a memo can be sent to Council.

Thomas said he would be inclined to speak at a Council meeting if the commission had spent all funds that were allocated to them in the last two years. He would be willing to speak in favor of no further cuts to the funding.

Todd said she believes the commission should say something.

Macy suggested also having past recipients of the funding speak with Council.

Hollis noted the commission had \$5,441 available last year but only awarded \$3,183. The commission could make a point that the reason not all of the funds were awarded because some of the proposals received were not quality programs or were programs that fit the criteria and the commission was being a good steward of public resources.

Thomas said he is willing to speak at a Council meeting.

Bixby moved to authorize Thomas to represent the Human Rights Commission at a City Council meeting to request the Human Rights Enhancement Funding be restored to \$3,183 but not reduced lower than the proposed \$2,500. The motion was seconded by Terrill and passed unanimously.

VI. Staff Reports

- A. **Community Services:** Hollis said the Social Service funding process has wrapped up. Staff will begin working on the Diversity Celebration planning in the next month.
- B. **Law Department:** No report at this time.
- C. **Human Rights Specialist:** Glaze said the department hosted and co-sponsored with the Human Resources Association of Central Missouri a meeting titled "Update on Equal Employment Opportunity Rules & Regs and How to Prevent Complaints." The featured speaker was Cornell Dillard, Human Relations Officer with the Missouri Department of Labor and Industrial Relations. There were more than 40 people in attendance including Human Resource professionals and members of the general public. Mr. Dillard discussed the three cases this year decided by the Supreme Court impacting employment law and gave his observations on the Ricci v. DeStefano case (Hartford Firefighters were quite insightful.) The attendees gave the program an overall rating of 3.83.

From Glaze's perspective one of the most encouraging comments shared by Mr. Dillard was information that the EEOC will receive a budget boost in FY10 for the first time in 8 years. This is significant as it has been reported that the EEOC has lost 25% of its workforce since 2001 which of course has resulted in an unbelievable backlog.

With regard to local inquiries, over the past few weeks most have been related to housing and public accommodation issues. Glaze also reported that staff was instrumental in assisting a Korean national obtain a modest application fee refund from an apartment complex.

- VII. **Public Comment:** There was no public comment.
- VIII. **Commissioner Comment:** Bixby told the commission of an incident she had at a local restaurant where the staff was unwilling to move a table to accommodate someone in a wheelchair. After speaking with the manager, the restaurant staff did comply.
- IX. **Closed Session to Discuss Pending Cases Pursuant to Section 610.021 (1) RSMo.:** Bixby made a motion to move to closed session to discuss cases pursuant to Section

610.021(1) RSMo. The motion was seconded by Terrill and a roll call vote was taken. Bixby called the roll with the following vote: Bixby – Aye, Glasgow – Aye, Macy – Aye, Terrill – Aye, Thomas – Aye, Todd – Aye.

X. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 8:24 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Steve Hollis, Manager

Office of Community Services