

Human Rights Council
Friday, October 26, 2007
9th Street Office Building, 11th Floor
Conference Room
11:00 a.m.

Council Members Present: Jon D. Strother, Chairman; David A. Drachsler, Vice Chairman; Members Charles Baugham; Donald O. Campen, Jr.; Dyana Mason; Deborah Segaloff; and Jagdish Singh.

Staff Present: Sandra D. Norman, Director; Cora M. Billings, Deputy Director; Cortley West, Intake Officer/EEO Manager; Lisa Hetrick, EEO Manager; Geraldo Williams, EEO Manager; and Timothy Wilson, Administration/Operations Manager.

Council's Attorneys Present: Guy Horsley, Senior Assistant Attorney General and Teri Miles, Senior Assistant Attorney General.

Call to Order and Adoption of Agenda and Minutes

The Chairman called the meeting to order. On motion by the Vice Chairman and seconded by Member Campen, the motion carried to adopt the draft agenda with the approved edits. On motion by Member Campen and seconded by the Vice Chairman, the motion carried to adopt the minutes as presented from the August 10, 2007 meeting.

Assistant Attorney General Horsley

Response to Query

- Assistant Attorney General Horsley answered questions regarding the Chairman's query on the agency's jurisdiction.
- After a lengthy discussion over immigration issues, it was decided that the Council's board would wait before taking further action until clarification is decided on what role the board will play on the immigration concerns across the Commonwealth.

Director's Report

Budget Reduction

- Ms. Norman reported that the agency as well as other state agencies just experienced a five percent (5%) reduction in budget. This cost the Human Rights Council (HRC) a \$21,000 reduction in its budget. Not sure if this is the end of the budget reduction or could be the beginning of further budget alterations. The agency met the quotas in the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEOC) contract, but did not upwardly modify it as a precaution to the budget crisis. She has not had to lay off any staff thus far. Investigations have not lost pace, especially with Mr. Geraldo Williams working on staff with Mr. West and Ms. Hetrick, while the senior investigator, Mr. Gerald Snead, has been on leave. As mentioned in the last meeting, Mr. Williams serves as a part-time investigator and is proficient in Spanish. Mr. Williams is returning to the Council having been one of its initial staff members at the beginning of the agency. Ms. Ashley Marriott has been unable to work as many hours as she did previously and will continue work as much as possible.

Technical Assistance Program Seminar (TAPS)

- The EEOC sponsored its TAPS on September 25, 2007 in Hampton. It was a great conference. Ms. Norman was in attendance with the deputy director, Cora Billings, Chairman Strother and Members Mason and Singh.

Race, Color, and Religion Training

- Ms. Norman, Ms. Billings, and Mr. Williams attended the "Investigating Race, Color, and Religious Discrimination," a training course sponsored by the EEOC for Fair Employment Practices Agencies (FEPA) was held in Phoenix, Arizona in October 2007.

Strategic Plan

- One major goal in HRC's plan is to review complaints in the intake process within 45 days. After this morning's meeting with the cabinet secretary's office, it was reported that Mr. West had met the present goal so proficiently that it was changed to 35 days.
- The investigators are doing well for meeting the investigative timeline for case closures within a year of case assignments.
- Meetings are held periodically with the cabinet secretary on the status of the agency's plan.

EEOC-Charlotte District Office Training

- The EEOC - Charlotte District Office held a Directors and Managers Conference for the FEPAs in Raleigh, North Carolina, September 12-13, 2007. Both Mr. West and Mr. Williams attended the conference. The conference's theme was "Serving Better Together." Mr. West gave an overview of conference topics discussed.

Outreach

- Ms. Norman has been following up with Ms. Marilyn Booker, Outreach Coordinator with the EEOC-Charlotte District Office concerning possible outreach initiatives. Items discussed include another public forum and a Human Rights forum in the spring.

Relocation of Human Rights Office

- The agency may move in the spring 2008 and relocate to the Washington Building on Bank Street. Ms. Norman has met with the architectural design team and will be updated with the status of moving procedures.

Pictures and Website

- Ms. Norman presented pictures from the August meeting and pictures Member Campen took during the June meeting and public forum held in Danville.
- The agency's website is being uploaded with pictures, other information and edits and should be completed soon.

Chairman's Report

Annual Report

- The committee of Members Baugham, Mason, and Segaloff will review the draft that is close to being completed by Ms. Billings. Also, Ms. Norman will meet a printer prior to submitting the draft to the committee.
- The Chairman requested Ms. Norman would initiate a request for the Council to make a brief presentation to the Governor while presenting him the annual report in person. Ms. Norman will confirm the request with the Governor's office via Secretary Baskerville.

Impact of Governor's Budget Reduction

- The Chairman was relieved that there have been no proposed staff lay-offs in response to budget cuts.

Legislative Proposal

- Ms. Norman has not heard anything regarding the proposed legislation submitted by Council members. No formal response has been received from the Governor's office and until one has been acknowledged, the proposal should be still under review.

Place of Public Accommodation

- A discussion was held about a night club in Virginia Beach that denied entry to African-Americans, especially those with hairstyles that include corn rolls and braids. One African-American female was denied entry and was told to try the owner's Newport News location because it was more "urban." This involves Title II of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.
- Federal court proceedings involving this night club will be tried soon probably in Norfolk. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is arguing the case.
- A brief discussion was held regarding racial discrimination or stereotypical discriminatory acts verses management privileges.

Immigration

- A discussion was held regarding the immigration issues focused on by the media and the current legislation enacted by a variety of local governments in the Commonwealth.

Tribute to Oliver Hill

- A page in the annual report will be designated to pay tribute to the late Oliver Hill, the famed civil rights attorney.

Training

- Assistant Attorney General Horsley will conduct training in conjunction with the December meeting. The training will begin at 10 am and precede the scheduled meeting at 11 am.

Appeal Assignment

- The Chairman appointed two (2) appeal panels. Member Campen will chair the panel for Case #1713 and the Vice Chairman will chair the panel for Case #1773.

There being no new business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 2:17 p.m.

Submitted by,

Jon Strother
Chairman

Timothy Wilson
Recorder