

Human Rights Council
Friday, October 31, 2008
9th Street Office Building, 11th Floor
Conference Room
11:00 a.m.

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

Staff Present: Sandra D. Norman, Director and Timothy Wilson, Administration/Operations Manager.

Call to Order

The Chairman called the meeting to order. Member Campen moved to adopt the draft agenda, seconded by the Vice Chairman and the motion carried. Member Baugham moved to adopt the draft minutes as presented from the June 13, 2008 meeting, seconded by Member Mason and the motion carried.

Director's Report

Gratitude to Council Members

- Ms. Norman thanked the Chairman and board members for attending the meeting while volunteering to waive their per diem and mileage reimbursement due to the impact on the agency from the state's budget shortfall.

Budget Reductions

- Ms. Norman informed the board that the Human Rights Council (HRC) budget was reduced with an additional 15% reduction. This is on top of the 7% reduction that agencies were previously required to cut.
- As a result of the budget cut, two (2) staff members were laid off. One full-time employee, Ms. Lisa Compton, an Investigator and one part-time employee, Ms. Ashley Marriott, an Office Assistant who processed the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's (EEOC) 212 forms.
- One part-time employee remains, Mr. Geraldo Williams, an Investigator and Hispanic Liaison, continues to interpret ongoing Spanish case investigations and incoming intake inquiries. His position may be eliminated pending further budget cuts.
- Ms. Norman distributed copies of the Governor's budget reduction plan pertaining to HRC.
- Due to the state of the economy, there has been a slight increase from last year of the total of new cases received during the fiscal year.

Relocation

- HRC will move to the Verizon Building at the corner of 6th and Main streets on the 7th floor. The tentative move date is March 2009.
- Ms. Norman was presented floor plans with two (2) options, A and B. Option B would be preferred which includes office space for Ms. Lisa Compton if she can be recalled to work.

Virginia Association for Human Rights (VAHR)

- Ms. Norman received a compact disc (CD) from the annual meeting of the Virginia Association for Human Rights with the conference's events held in June 2008 in Virginia Beach, Virginia.
- The CD is available for those board members that were unable to attend.

Civil Rights Memorial

- The unveiling ceremony for the Civil Rights Memorial held in July 2008 was a success.
- There were approximately 4,000 persons in attendance.
- Ms. Norman served as chairperson of the External Communications and Outreach committee and coordinated the Civil Rights exhibit for the public reception. The exhibit included displays from the Black History Museum and Cultural Center of Virginia, the R. R. Moton Museum of Farmville, Virginia and featured news articles from the Civil Rights Movement from the news media of central and Tidewater areas of Virginia.

EEOC Luncheon Speaker

- Ms. Norman was the luncheon speaker for the EEOC's Technical Assistance Program Seminar (TAPS) held in July 2008 at the Richmond Marriott Hotel. The TAPS program was sponsored by the Charlotte District Office of the EEOC.
- As a result of her well received speech in July, Ms. Norman was the luncheon speaker at the EEOC-TAPS in Durham, North Carolina in August at the request of the Charlotte District Office.

Civil Rights Symposium

- Ms. Norman and the Chairman attended a forum entitled "Race Relations in Virginia and Beyond" at St. John's Church located at 25th and Broad Streets on Tuesday, September 17, 2008. The forum was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice's Community Relations Service. The Honorable Ondray T. Harris, one of our former assistant attorney generals, is the current director of this federal agency. The forum highlighted information on training, programs and services provided by the Community Relations Service regarding civil rights issues across the United States.
- St. John's Church is the historic site of Patrick Henry's "Give me liberty" speech presented in 1775 in Richmond, Virginia.

Friends Association for Children

- Ms. Norman serves as a member of the board of trustees of the Friends Association for Children and was recently elected its 1st Vice President.
- As a result of the excellent performance of the Bells of Friends at the unveiling ceremony, they were invited to perform before the Community Foundation at the Jefferson Hotel. A former Friends Association for Children student who is now a professional musician will perform Saturday, November 1st.
- Ms. Norman was honored as a Volunteer of the Year at the annual meeting of the board of trustees. She was presented a Velox (a framed newspaper article).

Interpretation Services

- Mr. Geraldo Williams is volunteering his interpreting skills with the Richmond Public Schools at parent-teacher conferences at selected schools.

EEO Day

- Ms. Norman is an invited guest of Mr. Thomas Victory, President/CEO of Greater Richmond Urban League's EEO Day to be held at the Holiday Inn Koger Center in Midlothian, Virginia on November 7th. This is a regional event.

ADA Update

- Ms. Norman distributed copies of the updates for the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) that will be in effect on January 2009.
- Guy Horsley, Senior Assistant Attorney General and agency counsel, will conduct an overview of the updates with staff before the January effective date.
- Council members are welcome to come as soon as a date is confirmed for the training.

Chairman's Report

Appeal Process

- After a brief discussion regarding the Draft Amended Appeal Process Flow Chart, Member Baugham moved to adopt the document for implementation. It was seconded by Member Campen and the motion carried.
- Ms. Norman requested that the Chairman submit guidelines with the chart to explain details.

Annual Report

- Ms. Norman reported that the layout of the annual report was completed and the graphic artist was paid.
- The graphic artist is prepared to present the report online.
- It was inquired if the graphic artist would upload the report "in-kind." Ms. Norman will check to see if she will.

Legislative Proposals

- Ms. Norman reported that the proposed amendment to the Virginia Human Rights Act regarding the basis of age made it to the Governor's office.
- The proposed amendment helps persons working for an employer with more than 5, but less than 20 employees.

Winchester

- The Chairman was invited to attend a joint meeting in Winchester, Virginia comprised of several organizations to discuss related ideas and objectives. One of the mutual concerns is to establish a human rights commission for the City of Winchester and for Frederick County.
- Each group gave an overview of their various missions.
- The Chairman suggested that HRC may want to have a public forum in Winchester.
- The joint coalition will begin to meet every 3 months.
- A news article reported on the meeting, 60 persons were accounted for having attended the meeting. The Chairman cited approximately 100 persons were there interchangeably.

Resignation from Fairfax County Human Rights Commission

- The Chairman reported that he had resigned as a commissioner of the Fairfax County Human Rights Commission after 29 years of service.

New Business

Alternative Meeting Location

- The Vice Chairman suggested that the board meet at an alternative location for a future meeting, especially with adequate parking. The Hanover Tavern was suggested in Hanover, Virginia.
- HRC staff will check on the details of hosting the meeting at that site.

Housing Disparity for Hispanics

- Member Segaloff commented on the media reports of disparity toward Hispanics attempting to purchase homes and paying higher security deposits.
- Ms. Norman commented that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is looking into such scenarios and working with Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME) to investigate these alleged complaints.

Virginia Beach Commission and Police Force

- Member Segaloff reported that she had been in contact with the Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission.
- Last year, Member Segaloff presented an overview of the mission of HRC to the Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission. It was a good dialog between the local commission and Member Segaloff, especially discussing the issues ongoing within the city versus what we do at the state level.
- Officers of the Virginia Beach Police were present and expressed their attempts at sensitivity involving immigration concerns and other scenarios concerning stereotypes of their actions versus the bad press they receive and how it is displayed.

Sexual Abuse Response and Awareness (SARA)

- The Vice Chairman attended a symposium in Alexandria on sexual abuse and how the police officers in attendance expressed how they attempted to embrace all kinds of relationships that they encounter with sensitivity.

The meeting adjourned at 12:48 p.m.

Jon D. Strother
Chairman

Timothy Wilson
Recorder