

Council on Human Rights
Friday, October 6, 2006
4th Floor Conference Room, Office of the Attorney General
Pocahontas Building
11:00 a.m.

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

Staff Present: Sandra D. Norman, Director; Stacey Y. Brayboy, Deputy Director; Gerald Snead, EEO Manager; Cortley West, Intake/EEO Manager; and Timothy Wilson, Administration/Operations Manager.

Council's Attorney Present: Fred Kozak, Senior Assistant Attorney General.

Call to Order, Acknowledgements, Approval of Minutes, and Introductions

The Chairman called the meeting to order and received revisions to the agenda. Member Campen moved to adopt the minutes from the March 31, 2006 meeting with one (1) revision. Seconded by Member Baugham and motion carried. The Chairman introduced Senior Assistant Attorney General Fred Kozak, who represented Assistant Attorney General Guy Horsley in his absence.

Director's Report

Ms. Norman greeted the board and introduced Mr. Cortley West as the agency's Intake/EEO Manager. Mr. West has been with the agency for over a year and is pleased to have him on staff. She is anticipating having another investigator on staff soon. She wanted to fill the positions as soon as possible because of the recent budget allocation granted to the agency.

Relocation of Human Rights Office

- Still waiting on a date for relocating the Council's office to the Ninth Street Office Building. As soon as that information is provided, Ms. Norman will inform the board. She has met with various officials regarding the agency's relocation. Until the relocation begins, the agency's conference room has been altered to accommodate two (2) work stations for the new staff members.

Initiatives and Outreach

- Volunteered to serve as a partner with the Virginia Department of Business Assistance to assist new businesses within the Commonwealth with guidance regarding any EEO concerns the new businesses may have.

- Partnered with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to sponsor a booth at the “Feria de la Oportunidad” (translated from Spanish to English, A Day of Opportunity) for the Latino community in Richmond in conjunction with the Virginia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (VHCC). The agency was represented by Mr. Cortley West.
- Attended the Advanced Employee Discharge Training with Mr. West in August. The Virginia Human Rights Act was mentioned several times and it was evident that the Act played a significant role in the discussions held during the training session. A former Council Member, Victor Caldwell, an attorney and partner at Woods and Rogers, was one of the facilitators of the session.
- Ms. Norman, Ms. Brayboy, Mr. Wilson, and Vice Chairman Drachslar attended the annual conference of the Virginia Association of Human Rights Commissions (VAHRC) in Virginia Beach in June.
- Ms. Norman attended the 58th Annual Conference of the International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies (IOAHRA) in Atlantic City, New Jersey. The conference was well attended and very informative.
- The agency received an upward modification with the EEOC contract for 20 additional cases from 40. The total number of cases contracted for EEOC was 60 cases and HRC has met that goal.
- The agency co-hosted the Technical Assistance Program Seminar (TAPS) with the EEOC’s Charlotte District Office which was held in Richmond.
- Ms. Norman informed the board that Martha “Marty” Parrish has transitioned to the Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) and Guy Horsley is now serving as the agency’s counsel. The Vice Chairman moved to have the Council’s board draft a letter of appreciation for Ms. Parrish’s assistance to the agency. Seconded by Member Campen and motion carried. It was suggested that Ms. Norman compose a draft letter for the chairman’s signature.

Staff Reports

Mr. West

Day of Opportunity a.k.a. Feria de la Oportunidad

- Provided information about the Council’s services at Cloverleaf Mall located in the south side of Richmond. Ms. Marilyn Booker represented the EEOC and Mr. Geraldo Williams, a former staff member of the Council, served as an interpreter of the Spanish language. Mr. West distributed printed information in Spanish and English to persons who inquired about the Council’s services.

Ms. Brayboy

Governor’s Initiative

- Gave an overview of the Governor’s initiative to travel to various regions of the Commonwealth accompanied by his cabinet secretaries. Ms. Norman and Ms. Brayboy along with the Office of Administration staff have been requested to give any names of organizations that may be targeted to invite during the Governor’s visit. The next scheduled region to visit is northern Virginia. As soon as a date is given, she will contact board members to solicit possible organizations to target.

Network Connections of Virginia.

- The Governor is meeting young and minority professionals in different areas of the Commonwealth. Participants in the receptions held for these younger citizens include corporate business and community leaders, members of the Governor's staff, and members of the Virginia Legislative Black Caucus.

Small, Women, and Minority (SWAM) Businesses

- The Governor wants to increase state spending with SWAM vendors. This includes encouraging small, women and minority owned businesses to register with the state to become certified state vendors.

Mr. Wilson

- The Financial Disclosure Statement forms have been distributed to each board member. This is a mandate prescribed by the General Assembly and forms are due by January 15, 2007.

Statistical Reports

- The Director concluded the staff reports by giving an overview of the monthly statistical reports. The goal of a 45-day turn around on screening complaints has been met with the efforts of Mr. West. Presently there are 85 open cases and 35 complaints were received in September. Race is still the number one basis received and age is second. A brief discussion was held regarding the statistics presented.

Chairman's Report

Ballot Question #1 to the State Constitution regarding Marriage

The Chairman gave an overview of Ballot Question #1 to the Constitution of Virginia to prohibit same sex marriage and how it may affect the state's Bill of Rights. After a lengthy discussion on the proposed amendment, the Vice Chairman moved to have the Council's board adopt a resolution to urge the voters of Virginia to vote "no" for Ballot Question #1. Seconded by Member Segaloff and the motion carried. The Vice Chairman also moved to have Ms. Norman and Member Mason draft a letter of support to a press release subject to the approval of the administration. Seconded by Member Segaloff and the motion carried. Member Segaloff suggested that all board members names be listed and on the letter sent to the editors of various newspapers within the Commonwealth.

Amendments to the Virginia Human Rights Act

The Chairman gave an overview of three (3) proposed amendments to the Virginia Human Rights Act which included the following statutes: §2.2-2632, §2.2-2635, and §2.2-3701. The proposed amendments have been reviewed by counsel and there being no objection to the amendments by the board, the Chairman forwarded them to the staff to be submitted for the legislation process.

Board Retreat and the Board's Draft Strategic Plan

The Board held a retreat in June in Charlottesville, Virginia in June. Michael Shook, of the Department of Planning and Budget facilitated the retreat. Goals were set and strategies were discussed. Afterwards, a brief discussion was held regarding the draft plan. Once members have submitted changes, Michael Shook will incorporate and submit a final document. Members will need to set dates for goals to be implemented. Ms. Norman reported that she has started to implement some of the initiatives, especially with the outreach goals.

Annual Report

The Chairman proposed preparing an annual report to submit to the General Assembly. An annual report can provide data to justify resources. Members Mason and Segaloff volunteered to coordinate the report with staff. Member Baugham will also work with staff to work on the statistical data for the report. The deadline for the report would be for the 2008 General Assembly.

New Business

Wal-Mart Employment Practices

The Vice Chairman reported on the questionable employment practices cited in the media. Ms. Norman will check with the EEOC Charlotte District Office on the status of complaints received in this area.

Place of Public Accommodation

Citizens complained about a club in Virginia Beach for denying 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." Ms. Norman will consult with the Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission and will conduct an inquiry into the business.

HRC's 20th Anniversary

Ms. Norman informed the board that the agency will celebrate its 20th anniversary next year. Would like to incorporate a celebratory program along with the Human Rights Day Forum in spring 2007. Many persons significant to the establishment of the agency should be included in the event. A brief discussion was held on planning events for the 20th anniversary.

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 p.m.

Submitted by,

Jon Strother
Chairman

Timothy Wilson
Recorder