

NEW JERSEY HUMAN RELATIONS COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING

January 21, 2015

The regular meeting of the New Jersey Human Relations Council was held on January 21, 2015, at the New Jersey State Police Museum, NJ State Police Headquarters, State Police Drive E., West Trenton, NJ 08628.

HRC Officers and Appointed Public Members in attendance were as follows: Kay Delp, Kathy Esquiche, Louis Manzi, Richard Rivera, Joe Santagata.

Those serving on the Council and guests in attendance were the following: Amy Anist, Nancy Curry, Sean Dalton, Devon Douglas, Sideeq El –Amin, Debbie Freeman, Philip Freeman, Gabrielle Gallagher, Valerie Gurba, Tonya Hopson, Eli Honig, Walter Hudson, Christopher Iu, Edward Kerr, Leila Lawrence, Joe Mazza, Robbie Miller, Reverend Concetta Milton, Laura Morana, Jim Peeler, Elayne Resley, Susan Reston, Lisa Robinson, Linda Spagnuolo, Chuck Stein, Deborah Upchurch, Gregory Williams.

Those serving on the Advisory Board and guests in attendance were the following: Ashton Burrell, Angeline Dean, Mahonrry Hidalgo, Lawrence James, Terence Jones, Steve Landfield, Yumiko Mishima, Dr. Joan Rivitz, Reisa Sweet.

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Chairperson Richard Rivera called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. All assembled recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Open Public Meeting Act Statement

Chairperson Richard Rivera referred to the Public Meeting Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et. seq. and the posting of a notice on the meeting in newspapers.

Introductions

Council and Advisory Board members and guests introduced themselves and briefly told of their affiliations.

Presentation by the Department of Education

Speaker Nancy Curry, Department of Education, spoke of the work being done throughout New Jersey by the Department of Education. A handout describing the mission of the “Office of Student Support Services” (OSSS) was distributed, which explained the collaborative partnerships that have been established with various state agencies. Their website is: www.state.nj.us/education/students/safety/.

Cindy Wisted and Amy Anist, both from the Lawrence Department of Education, gave a presentation on a Character Education program in their school which has had positive effects for their student population.

Approval of Minutes

November 12, 2014 minutes were approved.

New Business

Rich Rivera explained the lists of HRC members and contacts are currently being updated. Much of the information that the NJHRC has for municipal and local contacts is not current, or the organizations are not operational at this time. Rich Rivera has e-mailed or attempted to make phone contact using the information on record; however, the response rate has been poor.

The HRC website is anticipating an update, pending a brainstorming session to be scheduled in February or March. The AG's office is coordinating with the NJHRC executive committee to make the necessary professional resources available to the NJHRC so that the website can reflect pertinent and informational attributes that would allow municipal and local HR organizations, as well as interested individuals from the public sector, to obtain information or post information about HR activities/events.

The NJHRC By-Laws and the N.J.S.A. 59:9DD-8, which establishes the existence of the NRHRC, are both now available on the official state website, www.NJHRC.org.

A meeting on December 10, 2014, was held with the Attorney General's Office and the NJHRC's executive committee. Past records pertaining to the NJHRC were physically transferred from the Division of Civil Rights to the Attorney General's Office. Rich Rivera, Chairperson, and Kay Delp, Secretary, spent about six hours sorting and disseminating the papers in the file boxes.

Kay Delp, NJHRC Secretary, spoke regarding budget issues. The NJHRC had a budgetary funding level that was administered through the Division of Criminal Justice for \$250,000 annually from its inception about 1999 through 2008. About half of this was allocated to five administrative support positions, and \$75K was allocated to "HRC Initiatives". Activities during that time included local and state conferences and state-wide public service announcements. However, the allocated budget since that time has decreased dramatically to the present day funding level, which is zero.

Jim Peeler, former NJHRC Chairperson, spoke regarding the NJHRC budget history, and his extensive efforts at attempting to restore some of the budgetary funding.

Richard Rivera spoke of Jerame Reid's case in December, 2014, in Cumberland County. The incident has many facets and perspectives; the investigation is ongoing and more complicated than initial reports and appearances might appear.

Walter Hudson, Chair of National Awareness Alliance, spoke of Jerame Reid, and expressed his position regarding the need for transparency and of the public's right to know during the investigation process.

Richard Rivera spoke of defining the HRC role in New Jersey and of being more active, and the relevance of the HRC's mission, according to the by-laws, and recent police shootings.

Elie Honig spoke of his attendance at a conference hosted by the NAACP on December 22, 2014 at Shiloh Baptist Church, Trenton, N.J.

Angeline Dean invited everyone to a January 29, 2015 event hosted by the Capitol City Coalition Committee.

Kay Delp said meeting notices will be sent out to the HRC via e-mails.

Rich Rivera said that there needs to be a discussion regarding the proposed Leadership Conference scheduled for May, 2015.

Elie Honig spoke of the HRC by-laws, Article 10, and requested a vote for members' clarification and the necessity for prior notice/approvals for any letters that are sent out on the HRC letterhead or any correspondence that represents the HRC.

Lou Manzi and Joan Rivitz spoke of HRC infrastructure, and of attending public events.

The NJHRC executive committee presented a plaque to Jim Peeler for his 12 years of service to the HRC, and a plaque to Joan Rivitz for her 10 years of service to the HRC.

Break for 5 Minutes

Richard Rivera spoke on his drafting of Resolution 2015-01, and of the need for a discussion of the applicability, necessity and/or role of the NJHRC Advisory Board. A general lively discussion ensued with input from various members and guests that included dissenting and assenting viewpoints as to the relevance of the NJHRC Advisory Board as it exists currently.

Steve Landfield, Advisory Board Chair, gave a short report on two relevant meetings that he had attended in November and December, 2014.

Floor opened to the public

Request made for e-mail regarding the dissolution of the Advisory Board to be presented at next meeting.

Adjournment

A motion was made and approved to adjourn the meeting at 2:05.

Respectfully submitted,

Kay Delp
Secretary, HRC

In conjunction with Val Gurba, AGO liaison administrative support.

Next Meeting March 18, 2015