

**NEW JERSEY HUMAN RELATIONS COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING
March 21, 2012**

The regular meeting of the New Jersey Human Relations Council was held on March 21, 2012, at the Richard J. Hughes Justice Complex, Market Street, Trenton, New Jersey. Chairperson Jim Peeler called the meeting to order at 10:25 a.m. Those serving on the Council and Advisory Board in attendance were the following: DAG Hester Agudosi, Mr. Bobby Battle, Mr. Tawfiq Barqawi, Mr. Richard Biolsi, Ms. Kay Delp, Ms. Wendy Galloway, Mr. Edward Haas, Mr. Lawrence James, Mr. Corbett S. Klein, Mr. Steven Landfield, Ms. Yumiko Mishima, Mr. Jim Peeler, Mr. Julius D. Ramsey, Dr. Joan Rivitz, Ms. Felicia Smith, Ms. Reisa Sweet. Others attending were: Guest Speaker, Ms. Roseanne Scotti, State Director, New Jersey Drug Policy Alliance; Joseph Carey, Cumberland County HRC, Ms. Claire Nagel, Vice-Chair, Cape May County HRC; and Ms. Kelly-Ann Mullan, Temporary Administrative Support for PS&CB.

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

All assembled recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Open Public Meeting Act Statement

Chairperson Peeler read the statement that pursuant to the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et. seq., notice of the meeting was filed with the Secretary of State, the *Asbury Park Press*, *The Times*, *The Courier Post*, *The Star-Ledger* and posted in the Office of the Attorney General.

Reading of Mission Statement

Chairperson Peeler read the Mission Statement: "The purpose of the New Jersey Human Relations Council shall be to promote prejudice reduction, education and address the problems of bias and violent acts based on the victim's race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, sexual orientation gender or disability." Further, Chairperson Peeler stated that "this is our purpose and we will adhere to our purpose".

Introductions

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

Minutes

January 18, 2012 NJHRC Meeting Minutes – Chairperson Peeler advised minutes were posted to the NJHRC web page.

Meeting Presentation

- *Price of Prisons* presented by Roseanne Scotti, State Director, NJ Drug Policy Alliance

Chairperson's Report

- Chairman Peeler announced Annual Conference, scheduled for May 15, 2012.
- Encouraged attendees to promote Conference and invite members of their respective departments, communities and all interested parties to attend.
- Nominations are needed for the Achievement Award. Handed out nomination form. Deadline for nominations to Holly Lees is April 13, 2012.
- Discussion regarding the Florida *Manual for Incarcerated Parents*. The *Manual* was made available at January's meeting. NJ is going to move forward duplicating and generating a *NJ Manual for Incarcerated Parents* making it the 2nd State in the nation to have one. The *Manual* will incorporate frequently asked questions and answers for incarcerated parents. Former AG Paula Dow gave her acceptance of moving forward in creating the NJ Manual, but made clear that the AG's office could not provide lawyers from DCJ to assist with this project. Chairman Peeler was able to speak with the Rutgers Law School regarding the use of law students to provide research regarding relevant issues and legalities in New Jersey.
- Chairman Peeler reminded every one that every department in State Government holds a seat on the NJHRC.
- Chairman Peeler provided a briefing on his activities as the NJHRC Chairman.
 - Meeting with Atlantic City Mayor Lorenzo T. Langford to discuss reimplementing, and organization of the Atlantic City Human Relations Commission. Mayor Langford suspended the Commission, but due to the population increase there is a great need for a citizen advocate regarding race, and religious matters.
 - Met with members of *Breaking Bread*, a half-way house for ex-offenders. There are many issues regarding re-entry and the suggestion was made for the NJHRC & Breaking Bread to partner up to create programs that would address the many issues and provide assistance and information.

Annual Conference – Hester Agudosi

- Online registration will be available on the NJHRC website.
- Encouraged members to invite and promote the Annual Conference.
- Nominations are needed for the Achievement Award. Nomination forms are on the NJHRC website.

OTHER BUSINESS:

- Dr. Joan Rivitz, Chair of NJHRC Advisory Board is also Chair of the Newark Re-Entry Program. She is active with former offenders regarding employment, race, etc.
- Looking to create pamphlets to give former incarcerated people.
- Encourage all local and municipal HRC's to develop programs focusing on the 3 R's.
- Joseph Casey, representative for Rabbi Adam Feldman, requested insight as to what New Jersey was doing implement the 3R's that the Council continues to discuss.
- Sam Stewart, Executive County Superintendent, Mercer County Office of Education has *The Adult Evening Program* of the Mercer County Technical Schools which provides courses designed to upgrade the present skill level of the student; acquaint the student with recent changes and latest techniques which have become used within the respective occupational area they are studying. They also provide entry level training for new employment opportunities or those interested in a career change. The Adult Evening Program is always prepared and willing to assist local industry in the retraining and upgrading of their employees by providing special courses and customized training that will meet individual company needs. <http://www.mcts.edu/programs/adult-evening>.
- Dr. Joan Rivitz spoke to James Harris of the NAACP. He expressed many concerns about the economy and the lack of employment. They are witnessing new friction in Newark regarding former gang members wanting employment in their neighborhoods, but are unsuccessful securing employment due to the lack of jobs being offered and other people coming in to the neighborhood and securing the few vacate employment opportunities.
- Dr. Rivitz suggested a "report card" was needed for the agencies that claim they are willing to hire ex-offenders. It was reported that there are between fifty to seventy-five agencies that claim they will hire ex-offenders, but the belief is that they do not choose the ex-offenders.
- Hester Agudosi discussed:
 - The importance of bringing back issues discussed to every one's communities.
 - How hate crimes are handled in New Jersey, the current trends and the media's attention to these crimes. She referenced the Tyler Clementi case and the Trayvon Martin case.
- Ed Haas, DCR discussed employment discrimination and the status of ex-offenders facing discrimination. Ex-offenders are currently not a protected class under the NJLAD. The only way to make ex-offenders a protected class is through an act of legislation. DCR's ability to assist with this issue is limited.
- Kay Delp suggested that the focus on re-citizenship rate should have more positive aspects. The more this population is referred to as ex-offenders the less likely employers will chose them for jobs.
- The question was also raised *what impact would privatization of prisons have on re-entry into the ex-offenders communities?*

COMMITTEE'S:

- Chair requested members sign up and activate the committee's of the Council. The committee's are as follows:

Education Committee ~ Promotes & locates progressive prejudice reduction education for youth & adults.

- Members signed up: Dr. Joan Rivitz, **Chair**, Ms. Reisa Sweet, Mr. Chuck Stein, and Dr. Paul Winkler.
 - Dr. Rivitz stated she will send Ms. Lees the names of the other current members.

Community Outreach & Human Relations Commissions Liaison ~ Develops communication strategies for the Council to communicate and assist county and municipal HRC's in achieving their objectives.

- Members signed up:

Law Enforcement and Community Relations ~ Facilitates programs for the law enforcement community and addresses the problems associated with bias crime.

- Members signed up: Maj. Wendy Galloway (Ret.), **Chair**; Mr. Richard Biolsi

Policy and Reports Committee ~ Compiles reports and recommendations that represent the findings and positions of the HRC.

- Members signed up:

Housing Committee ~ Addresses housing issues and impact on diversity.

- Members signed up: Steven Landfield, **Chair**

Public Relations Committee ~ Inform the public and promote the HRC, it's projects, activities and events.

- Members signed up: Corbett Klein (will be member, but not Chair)

Committee Reports ~

Housing: Steve Landfield, Chair

Avoid The Ghetto – is an app for smart phones that will direct a motorist around the high crime areas on the route to their destination. There is a poll that asks “do you think this is racist?”

Education: Sam Stewart

Grade level reading from K through 4th grade has shown a 70% illiterate rate. It was stated that the economy is a huge factor and the Dept. of Education is taking this issue very seriously.

Advisory Board

- Corbett Klein, Mercer County HRC spoke of the Black History Month program that was offered and co-sponsored by Trenton Film Society, NAACP Trenton Branch, & the Philadelphia Chapter of Men of All Colors Together. After film presentation there was a panel discussion led by Mr. Klein, Joan Rivitz, Christopher Nicholson & James Credle.
- Mr. Klein is working with an organization called Toastmasters. They are working with people being served at the Trenton Rescue Mission to promote and teach public speaking skills. Speech is an important skill for reintegration and employment opportunities for this population. <http://toastmasters83.org/>
- Jim Peeler reminded the Board Members of the 16th Annual Conference being held on May 15, 2012 focusing on “Resources, Re-Entry = Results.” The Conference will again be recognizing exceptional individuals, and/or organizations who have made outstanding contributions promoting diversity and unity in their communities.
- The NJHRC is working on producing a manual for incarcerated parents on resources available to them to help cope with child-related issues. It would be modeled upon the “Florida Manual for Incarcerated Parents issued in 2008 by Florida Institutional Legal Services.
- Dr. Rivitz addressed the board and spoke of the concern for both the Board and Council and their low attendance. How do the board and council members encourage others to attend the bi-monthly meetings and the annual conference.
- Steve Landfield, Chair of the Housing Committee, made the suggestion of using social media, such as Twitter and Facebook, to advertise the NJ HRC bi-monthly meetings, the Annual Conference and the projects they work on.
- Claire Nagel, Cape May County HRC shared details of an article in “Yes” Magazine in relations to prisons and the rapidly expanding size of the prison population and high recidivism rate. <http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/beyond-prisons/just-the-facts-its-a-locking-people-up-problem>
- Riesa Sweet, OC HRC, requested information regarding resources for the distribution of information pertinent to community discord and the focus of this years’ conference. April 19th the OCHRC through Ocean County Community College presented a bias awareness training “Cross Cultural Coalition Building.” There was also a screening of a documentary about activist William Kunstler. The screening was presented by his two-daughters. In Lakewood there is community tension with regards to housing between the Orthodox Jewish and Latino immigrant communities. The Superintendent of Lakewood schools has resigned amid the discord.
- Larry James advised the group of a new Philadelphia ordinance that prohibits employers from asking applicants about their criminal record during the first round of interviews. This is to allow ex-offenders to be considered for employment based on their qualifications.

Announcements

Unity Achievement Award nomination deadline: April 13, 2012

Next Meeting Date: Annual Conference –May 15, 2012

Meeting adjourned at 12:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Holly A. Lees

*** Submitted without review and approval by Chairman*