

**NEW JERSEY HUMAN RELATIONS COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING
SEPTEMBER 18, 2013**

The regular meeting of the New Jersey Human Relations Council was held on September 18, 2013, at the Richard J. Hughes Justice Complex, Market Street, Trenton, New Jersey. Chairperson Jim Peeler called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m.

Those serving on the Council in attendance were the following: Deputy Chief Alex Adkins, Mr. Bobby E. Battle, Ms. Pauline M. Bey, Secretary Richard Biolsi, Ms. Kay Delp, Mr. Philip Freeman, Chief Edward M. Kerr, Jr., Ms. Victoria Kuhn, Mr. Joshua Levy, Ms. Rowena Madden, Chairman Jim Peeler, Mr. Gregory Williams.

Those serving on the Advisory Board in attendance were the following: Mr. Lawrence B. James, Mr. Steve Landfield, Ms. Yumiko Mishima, Ms. Karen Positan, Advisory Board Chairperson Dr. Joan Rivitz, Ms. Reisa Sweet.

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

All assembled recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Open Public Meeting Act Statement

Chairperson Peeler reviewed the statement that pursuant to the New Jersey Open Public Meeting 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, and The Star-Ledger and posted in the Office of the Attorney General.

Introductions

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

Presentation

Jane A. Siegel, Ph. D., Associate Professor of Criminal Justice and Past Chair of the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice at Rutgers University, Camden.

Dr. Siegel stated that, while there is no one keeping track of the number of children of incarcerated parents in the U.S., there are an estimated 2 million such children nationwide and 25,000 in New Jersey. About 10% of these children go to foster care and the rest are taken care of by family members. Children of color are far more likely to experience this circumstance than white children. They are at times called

the hidden victims of incarceration and it is important to begin to identify them and provide for their needs during the incarceration of their parents. Intergenerational incarceration is prevalent.

While research indicates that behavioral, emotional and academic problems are generally no greater with these children than the general school population, there seems to be a stigma attached to them and judges and teachers treat them differently. They also face ostracism and harassment by peers.

Dr. Siegel referred to Sesame Street having a character that is the child of an incarcerated parent and they have produced materials on the topic for distribution to families and teachers.

Rutgers will become the host of the National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated, under the leadership of Ann Adalist-Estrin. Also, the Obama administration has developed an interagency group approach to the children of incarcerated parents.

Jim Peeler stated that the NJHRC could be the genesis of various programs that benefit both New Jersey and the nation on this issue. Victoria Kuhn from the NJ department of Corrections stated that there is a changing mentality about incarcerated people, emphasizing education and the provision of social services to try to cut into the recidivism rate.

Dr. Siegel suggested that a good focus for the NJHRC is to influence the public to de-stigmatize these children.

Chairman's Report

Jim Peeler talked about speaking engagements that he has had throughout the state during the summer, primarily talking about the children of incarcerated parents. He has spoken with colleges about how the HRC might be helpful with programs that they develop in this area. He has also been working with Pastor Davis from the dream center in Camden, and he has spoken with legislators who have offered support of our programs. He has generally been trying to get the name of the Council out to the public. He urged members to become more active in the council by joining committees.

Jim explained that an election of officers will take place in June of 2014 and anyone interested in the positions of chair, vice chair or secretary should submit their names or the names of people they are recommending to him, along with their resumes.

Chairman Peeler announced that Dr. Joan Rivitz has been appointed to the U.S. Civil Rights Commission Special Advisory Committee for New Jersey.

Committee Reports

Education Committee

Chairperson Dr. Joan Rivitz reported that the committee is monitoring tenure reform and the student evaluation process.

The number of bullying incident reports has increased, most likely because of the new mechanism for reporting included in the bullying legislation.

Housing Committee

Chairperson Steve Landfield expressed concern about the amount of lead paint still found in homes where there are young children. He will present a proposal to address this problem at a future meeting.

Steve also addressed the work he has done to get a council twitter account on line and has encouraged members to use it. At the next meeting he will have a laptop available in order to instruct members on the use of twitter. He is also recommending an annual directory of members, an idea that was enthusiastically endorsed. After some discussion, it was decided that it would probably be best located on the NJHRC website.

In a related matter, Karen Positan requested that the minutes of each meeting be sent out to members prior to the following meeting.

Law Enforcement and Community Relations Committee

No report.

Liaison Report

Philip Freeman, liaison to the Division on Civil Rights, reported that his office has met with the interscholastic organization that oversees high school sports in the state because of reports of racial slurs occurring at games. They have agreed to update their policies concerning discriminatory taunts and behaviors at games. It is important to get the word out to constituents that the division is there to help people who are facing discrimination. Jim Peeler will get together with Mr. Freeman and Mr. Landfield to talk about ways for the NJHRC to help in this effort.

Advisory Board

Chairperson Dr. Joan Rivitz recommended that Pauline Bey be approved by the Council as a member of the Advisory Board. Ms. Bey is extremely active in many human relations oriented organizations and she comes highly recommended.

MOTION TO APPROVE PAULINE BEY AS A MEMRER OF THE ADVISORY BOARD (Biolsi/Battle). MOTION APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Advisory Board member Reisa Sweet announced that her Lakewood group would be welcoming the Kidsbridge Tolerance Museum to Lakewood for a Veterans Day program, featuring a speaker from the Simon Wiesenthal Center.

Old Business

There was a short follow up discussion about producing an annual directory of members of the Council and the Advisory board.

NEW BUSINESS

Joan Rivitz suggested that we look into including a presentation on the Sesame Street Teacher Training program in our annual conference.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:01 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Richard Biolsi
Secretary