

NEW JERSEY HUMAN RELATIONS COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING
September 16, 2015

The meeting of the New Jersey Human Relations Council was held on September 16, 2015 at the New Jersey State Police Museum, NJ State Police Headquarters, State Police Drive E, West Trenton, New Jersey 08628.

HRC Officers in attendance were as follows: Tawfiq Barqawi, Lou Manzi, and Richard Rivera.

Those serving on the Council and guests in attendance were as follows: Philip Freeman, Gabrielle Gallagher, Valerie Gurba, Edward Haas, Tonya Hopson, Christopher Iu, Terence Jones, Jim Logue, Laura Morano, Assemblywoman Maria Rodriguez-Gregg, Mary Gotz Rother and Chuck Stein.

Those attending on the Advisory Board and guests in attendance were as follows: Pauline Bey, Angeline Dean, Gabrielle Gallagher, Mahonrry Hidalgo, Yumiko Mishima, Karen Positan, Joanne Reilly, Dr. Paula Rodriguez-Rust and Reisa Sweet.

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Richard Rivera, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:15 am.

Open Public Meeting Act Statement

Rich referred to the Open Public Meeting Act, **N.J.S.A.** 10:4-6 et. seq. and recited the posting of the notice of this meeting that was in the newspapers.

General Announcements

Rich stated this was NJHRC's election day. Introductions were made. Karen Positan introduced her guest, Dr. Paula Rodriguez-Rust. Mary Gotz Roth was present to represent Senator Teresa Ruiz. Jim Logue was present to represent Assemblywoman Rodriguez Gregg.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made and carried to accept the August meeting minutes.

Chairman's Report

Rich's verbatim comments: "Last month I met with the family of Derek Hoffman to let the family and the community knows about our services. The father of the deceased was misquoted in the newspaper and there was information being disseminated throughout the community that was not correct. The Ocean County Prosecutor's Office handled everything very well and did not release their investigative findings until after Derek Hoffman's burial. That was a success for the Human Relations Council.

Tonight is a public demonstration in Lyndhurst, New Jersey. In Lyndhurst, the Police Chief is Jim O'Connor. I had a working relationship with him prior to joining the Human Relations Council. He is a phenomenal individual who is very transparent, open and community oriented. He had the misfortune of having 2 separate police shootings where 2 individuals were shot and killed in a 9 month period. Smack in the middle of that, one of his officers was on a train coming back from the Unity Tour. This train crashed and flipped over in Philadelphia. One of his officers was one of the heroic individuals who assisted other passengers and helped them get medical attention. These are three critical incidents that took place in the Chief's jurisdiction. I put him in touch with Larry Ham from the People's Organization

for Progress (POP). Larry has a bus going over tonight. The POP is looking for answers, since it has been a year for Kaled Ashford who was shot and killed by police and the family has no answers and no grand jury announcement yet. It is going to be a peaceful demonstration and will bring attention and awareness to the family's concerns and to the community's concerns. That is it for the Chairman's report since our last meeting. I wanted to ask Angeline to talk about the expungement program".

Angeline Dean's verbatim comments: "Good morning. The non-profit that I have deals with re-entry and we have taken on the issue of expungements. On July 30th, in Trenton, we partnered with the Mercer County Prosecutor's Office, the Trenton Police Department, the College, and the Citizen's Police Advisory Council. We did a "What's the 411 Program?" where the police could be transparent with the community members and the community members could be transparent with the police. Also, to learn who in their appointed districts were over the Citizens Police Advisory Council and therefore ask questions. After that, we dealt with expungements for the community. We had 65 people show up, which is big in the city of Trenton, because the city is very territorial. It was important because everyone came that needed to know. They found out before the night was over whether or not they could have their records expunged. We told the Acting Prosecutor that this is not enough. Many of these individuals need help filling out the packets. I have a Master's degree and I am a little intimidated by the fullness of those packets. And so on October 8th we are bringing some of those same people back and we have fine-tuned the process of finding out if your record can be expunged. And then immediately we have about 10 pro-bono lawyers who are going to sit at a table and just finish the whole packets with them. The Acting Prosecutor's Office has also agreed to supply not only the food but to supply the stamped addressed self-envelopes that need to go in the packet. Now there are two issues that we are looking at right now. According to the new law that was just passed by the New Jersey Supreme Court, it is now making expungements even harder. It does not permit expungement where the applicant petitioner committed multiple offenses on separate occasions. Before, you were allowed to still be able to have that expunged. So what we are also doing right now is we looked at the process of expungements. If you don't have a job because the expungement is on your record, then to get the record expunged you have to pay a \$75.00 filing fee, you have to have a self-addressed stamped envelope in each of the 12 envelopes that have to be mailed out throughout the State and they have to be mailed out certified mail and then copies have to be attached to each one of the envelopes. They are looking at spending between \$150.00 and \$200.00 by themselves with the free lawyers to get expungements handled. So now with this law that has just been passed, it is suppressing the people once again. I had asked Rich if he could look at this law with whoever is with the Policy Committee. We have reached out to Senator Turner; we also reached out to Assemblywoman Moya, who we will be meeting with tomorrow. We are looking at Parks' Casino to possibly do a pilot program where they give us a donation or sponsorship money so that for those that can have their records expunged, we will pick up the cost for them. Right now they are strapped and they are not going to be able to pay that. With this law now, those who came out on July 30th, that might have been eligible for expungement, when they come back out on October 8th they might not be in the position now. It was great to see people find out "I can get this off my record!". For young people, they can go to school because this can come off. We are just afraid that come October, some of those individuals will not be able to do this. So that is what we want to look at. That law, and how or what can we do to make the necessary changes".

Rich reminded Angeline that when she reaches out to remember that the Senator is represented here and also the Assemblyperson. That is the beauty of the HRC- a perfect opportunity. Angeline said that everyone is invited.

Further comments from Rich; "The Attorney General is having an event. We sent an e-mail blast a week or so ago on the 30th. It is on the 30th at the War Memorial. It is about policing and community outreach. It will be a phenomenal program. The US Attorney is going to be there and it is on our web site. If anyone is interested, register early as I anticipate it to be a capacity crowd. More information is available on our web site as well as on the Attorney General's web site for that event. There are 2 other events. One is on October 1st in Passaic County on diversity inclusion. And NOBLE, which is the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives, in conjunction with the Attorney General's Office and the US Attorney is having a program on the same night as well".

Advisory Board Report

Yumiko Mishima referenced an e-mail from Steve Landfield about stepping down as chair. She will get clarification from him as to whether he will fill out his term, which is for three years, or if he will resign immediately so a vice chair could step up. She reported that the Advisory Board would like to offer to Council to take on the volunteer task of putting together the May conference and have at the conference the topic of Anti-Bullying in Education: Merging Best Practices and Legal Compliance, with a featured workshop on transgender. Dr. Paula Rodriguez-Rust would run that workshop and she will also be the key note speaker at the conference.

Rich spoke of his support for that initiative. He said that the Advisory Board should circulate ideas amongst the HRC as to what should be the key elements for the conference. The AB can spearhead those efforts, but collectively we should see what people's concerns and interests are and what the community needs are, and incorporate that to collectively come up with a theme as well as a workshop. Yumiko offered that this is the resources that we have and can get together by May. If there is a different theme, that might alter what we can offer. Reisa mentioned that Ocean County had a conference about transgender and it was extremely well received. She had contacted the Ocean County Superintendent, but a notice was never sent out to the community. Nevertheless, attendance was still well received.

Rich said that the rainbow collation should be seating at the table here to represent all segments of society that do not have a voice and are vulnerable. He will continue his recruitment to get people engaged. There is a new recommendation form that some attendees have filled out and it will be addressed under new business. The HRC needs to get more people. He said that Mahonrry has been showing up and working with Dr. Laura on education issues. Before the next meeting, he wants to get something on paper and collectively organize it. There are a lot of AB people that didn't show up and they should be included, too.

Tawfiq said he would like to address people from the AB not attending the meetings. He wants to be sure that all of the active people are still engaged. The Council appointed them and can also dismiss them if they are not working.

A discussion followed concerning the apparently vacant position of chair for the Advisory board, and it was determined that this must be clarified as soon as possible so the AB can be mobilized. Rich recommended that an e-mail go to the AB members stating that a re-organization meeting will take place at the November meeting. The AB would choose their own officers. Tawfiq asked if all of the listed AB members can be contacted to see if they want to remain on the AB- many of them have not attended meetings in the last year. New and active members could then be appointed.

Lou Manzi commented on the difficulties regarding the various government appointments. Roughly 30-40 % of the appointees have never attended, or have shown up for one meeting and never correspond or return. An appointee may have a two or three year term and then says they can no longer serve, but never communicates that to the office who appointed them. People cannot resign to the NJHRC officers or administrative assistant. They have to resign to the person who appointed them. The HRC is dealing with a lot of lagging appointments. Maria Rodriguez was here last month and nobody knew who she was. We all introduced ourselves and found that she is a new appointee. After two or three calls to the Governor's office, they said she was on the Executive Committee. He mentioned that the good news is that progress is being made.

Committee Reports

The Education committee has a draft report. Once it is finalized, they will submit it to the Council.

Old Business

Regarding the IAOHRA conference, Phil Freeman thanked everyone for his nomination to attend the conference, but he still has not heard if the funding went through. Council members had voted for a public member to attend since Rich, Lou, and Kay could not attend. Rich will follow up today to see if there is any clarification needed for Phil to attend. Rich is willing to pay out of pocket as long as he is reimbursed.

The NJHRC bi-annual report will be tabled at this time. It must be worked thru the Policy Committee and the AB, as well as through the other committees. The Policy and Reports Committee and the Education Committee are the only two that are up and running. The Law Enforcement and community Outreach Committee still has to get off the ground and to be formulated. Someone is needed to lead that effort. Rich will be willing to spend time with the members of that committee. Terence Jones has committed some time and he has been traveling around the State working with different communities. Angeline Dean has been on the ground here in Trenton. Karen Positan reported that she has tried to reach Community Outreach people but has gotten no responses yet. She will try and reach out to them again.

New Business

Rich spoke of the review and vetting of new members. New recommendation forms are now available to recruit new members who are interested and who would participate to bring something to the table and to help those who are already here. Current members should fill out this form and vouch for them. For example, Karen Positan brought Dr. Paula Rodriguez-Rust. Terence Jones brought Mahonrry Hidalgo. Karen Positan also submitted Joanne Reilly, who has been coming for the last several meetings. Rich mentioned that voting by proxy should be considered; that is something the Policy Committee can talk about.

A discussion followed as to how the Council should appoint people to the AB. Phil Freeman advised that a show of hands would be acceptable to appoint new people to the AB. These new members of the AB

would be non-voting members. In the future, they could be recommended to government officials as potential appointees.

Rich made motions to appoint Dr. Paula Rodriguez-Rust and Joanne Reilly to the AB. The motions were carried and approved.

Tawfiq expressed frustration that if someone is appointed, they should participate in the meetings. He said that previously six AB members were appointed but only 1 person came and sometimes we appoint them but don't see them for the rest of the year. There are people we have not seen for years. We want people to be committed and he would like to see the faces at more than 2 meetings.

Lou said that there are AB members who come every meeting and who cannot vote, which is like taxation without representation. They should be rewarded in some way. He said that he will stay on the Executive Committee but not be the vice chair. He would like a council of contributing members who would be able to vote. Rich asked Phil if that needs to go back to the Legislation or would it be a by-law? Phil responded that the answer is through Legislature.

A discussion resulted in the determination that if the State is closed due to inclement weather, Val will send out an e-mail indicating the meeting is canceled with no specific date for a reschedule.

A discussion followed on voting by proxy and if an AB member can be a voting member. Phil offered that currently there is no process. There is no proxy system in place that enables someone who is physically not here to vote. The Council has the authority and jurisdiction to provide that process. That would have to be done by nomination and a majority vote. Rich asked if something could be drafted for the next meeting and then we could amend the by-laws. Phil said that he will do some research and come back with suggestions. Also, the Policy committee would like to consider implementing an attendance policy for members to ensure attendance. If there are 3 consecutive meeting absences that are not excused, there should be something in place for an attendance policy.

The NJHRC officer elections commenced with Phil's comments: "Public and appointed members as well as ex-officio members can vote. Ex-Officio members cannot serve as officers. AB members cannot vote. Someone can nominate another member. Someone can nominate themselves for office. The Treasurer is a relative position, since we have not had a budget for a Treasurer to manage for years. This is a straight forward process. Names are placed in nomination with no set amount of names in criteria. It is up to whoever is running the nominations to decide when it is closed. Normally, the existing Chair does not participate. In the past, nominations could be made from the floor or there is a form that could be completed. Last year we decided we would abandon the form. That would be my recommendation. The position of Chair has one nomination who is Rich, who has agreed to serving. Are there any other individuals who would like to serve? Let's take a vote. Motion to elect Rich River as the Chair to the HRC. Motion and seconded. Any discussion? So all are in favor. Let the record state one abstention- all in favor. Vice Chair – floor is open for Vice Chair. Kay Delp was nominated. Any other for Vice Chair? Even though she cannot be here, she said that she would accept the position. Nominated, all in favor. Kay is now Vice Chair. Treasurer- Tawfiq – nominated, motion carried. Tawfiq – Treasurer. Kathy Esquiche is stepping down. So we need a Secretary and will have another open position. The council can enact someone to serve in an acting capacity until a replacement comes in. There are 2 Senate vacancies. We have to leave the seat vacant. We can appoint someone in an acting capacity. Volunteer them to the AB and bring them in to the pleasure of the Council. Next meeting is in November. We can also go to the Governor's office to appoint someone".

Joanne Reilly offered to volunteer. In the short term she can act as the Secretary/Treasurer. Rich commented that while the position of Secretary is vacant, hopefully at the next meeting, more people will be available through government appointments, and we will get that taken care of.

Adjournment

A motion was made and approved to adjourn the meeting at 11:30 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Valerie Gurba, Administrative Assistant, in conjunction with Kay Delp, NJHRC Executive Committee

NEXT MEETING NOVEMBER 18TH, 2015