

NEW JERSEY HUMAN RELATIONS COUNCIL MINUTES OF MEETING

November 18, 2015

The meeting of the New Jersey Human Relations Council was held on November 18, 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, Kay Delp, and Richard Rivera.

Those serving on the Council and guests in attendance were as follows: Gail Beran, Valerie Gurba, Edward Haas, Elie Honig, Tonya Hopson, Christopher Iu, Jim Logue, Lou Manzi, Laura Morano, Assemblywoman Maria Rodriguez-Gregg, Joe Santagata, Chuck Stein, and Greg Williams.

Those serving on the Advisory Board and guests in attendance were as follows: Jahnbaz Almas, Pauline Bey, Gwen Devera, Stephanie Fisher, Mahonry Hidalgo, Terence Jones, 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 10:17 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

There was a moment of silence for the victims of the terrorist attacks overseas. The Chair thanked all for their attendance.

Elie Honig, Director of DCJ, gave a presentation on the "AG Directive 2006-5: Supplemental Law Enforcement Directive Regarding Uniform Statewide Procedures and Best Practices for Conducting Police-Use-Of-Force Investigations". His presentation explained how the Attorney General's office is going out into the community and is focused on transparency, community policing, building trust and communication between law enforcement and the community, and police involved shootings. The AG's office has been having meetings across the state. The Directive requires a representative from the AG's office to go out into the community and explain how the policies work. By the end of the year, these sessions will have been held with every county prosecutor's office in the state. This Power Point presentation is posted on the HRC web site. After the presentation, the floor was opened to questions from the public.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made and carried to accept the September 16, 2015, meeting minutes.

Chairman's Report

Rich reminded the council that with the resignation of Kathy Esquiche, a Governor appointed public member, the HRC Secretary position was vacant. Joanne Reilly, a regular attendee from the MHANJ, was willing to fill the position as "Acting Secretary" until other public members were appointed. It was decided that Joanne would fill this opening at this time.

Rich discussed an ongoing project that he is involved with at Seton Hall Law School. Students there have developed a project based on a presentation that he had given on issues regarding law enforcement, which were related to things that they would see in municipality. They became thoroughly engaged in the project, which has consumed a lot of Rich's time as well. They are looking at a municipality close to their campus in Newark and doing court observations. They are seeing what people are getting tickets for in traffic court, what the fines are, how crowded the court is, how they are treated and so on. He plans to have someone come in the next few months to HRC to do a presentation, because it is related to what the HRC is trying to accomplish. It also brings in a lot of our stake holders, such as different police departments that are involved, the Office of the Attorney General, the Administrative Office of the Courts, etc. The students are looking at a microscope aspect of what this little municipality is doing, and they have noticed a great racial disparity. They have seen how people are being treated and what the fines are. Once the numbers are in and formalized, this project can be brought forward and will show what a tremendous project it has been. The officers in this municipality issued close to 10,000 tickets last year. The students spent all of October, 2015, going full time to the courts, which is in operation four days each week. They made over 900 observations of people, such as whether people that need interpreters are actually getting those services; whether people who are entitled to public defender are getting the service or whether people with mental illness are being treated fairly. It was really a phenomenal project that they spearheaded and took upon their own outside of their clinics and their regular classwork. Rich is fully immersed just now in this project with Seton Hall Law School.

Rich said he wanted to touch upon was the summit because he had asked Elie to talk about it, but that Elie could not. Rich felt the summit was well attended, but that more people could have fit into the event. The HRC was the first to hear of it, and the message was to register quickly because they were going to fill up. It did, and there were people excluded. It was at the War Memorial and there were about 30 people outside. They were protesting the shooting of Rodney Hearn in Trenton. It was a fascinating aspect, because you got to see their concerns and they brought it to the right place at the right time. There were hundreds of law enforcement officials in unison going into this place wondering what these people were protesting. People were not able to register on site. People were asked multiple times if they were registered as part of an effort to control the people coming in and to avoid having the meeting be disrupted. The summit was broken down into several panels. Rich felt that it was a great program. The Attorney General, John Hoffman, and Paul Fishman were present, along with local reverends and pastors from the communities talking about things. Everybody was there at 9 am, everyone was there for a great lunch, and by the time the pastors were up, 80% of the room had cleared out. The chiefs are gone; it was just the community stakeholders that were there, and then the truly dedicated law enforcement officials that wanted to hear from the community, because after all, this was a community outreach project. That was something that was very disheartening. It was brought to the attention of the Attorney General's Office. In the future, they are going to consider changing it so that people are there and engaged for the most important part, which is listening to the community. Nevertheless, it was a great program. Rich missed the main presentations at the beginning because he stayed outside to listen to the protestors.

His concern was for their safety and he wanted to hear what they had to say, so he was taking notes on what their demands were. He introduced himself as the Chair of the HRC; they seemed happy that someone was listening to them. There was a State Trooper who was in charge of the security at the War Memorial; very professional with over 25 years of experience, dressed properly and had his badge on his hat, as per standard dress. The Trooper came up, spoke politely to everyone, talked to the leader of the organization and asked "Sir, do you have a permit?" They did not have a permit, so Rich offered to fill out the permits and to accept responsibility for it. The Trooper assisted by obtaining the proper documents. He was professional, courteous, and going above and beyond to do the right thing. Rich said that what happened next was a funny story, but a sad commentary. The Trooper left to return the paperwork and was coming back outside to monitor. Rich recounted the situation: "Up rolls up 'Joe Cop.' The officer has no idea what has just taken place over the last 20 minutes. This officer sees someone on the bullhorn. He got out of his trooper car, not wearing a hat so we don't know who he is, and asked 'Hey what's going on here?'" I informed that his colleague had just de-escalated this whole thing, made something nice out of it, and developed a great relationship with the people. It goes into what Elie was just saying about having 50 great contacts with an officer, but you remember the one bad one. So I pull the guy on the side and I'm like, listen, your buddy just ran inside with the paperwork. Everything is good. I promise you. Just give it like a minute or two. It will all work itself out; you will be able to figure it out. He gave it a minute, it worked out, there was a press conference, it all worked out and everyone went on their way. But they were all seen and heard and they got their message across. So that was the main thing, and I felt it was important to stay outside with them because all of them could not get in. And this wasn't a day for people to get arrested at a law enforcement gathering on communities."

Rich mentioned the Governor's statement yesterday about Syria. He reiterated that the HRC is not taking up a position here, one way or another, because that is not our function here. Our function is to deal with whatever the ramifications of statements like those are, and how it affects our communities, particularly our communities of immigrants. When people come asking questions about what we are doing, we need to know if something is taking place on a global scale, which may affect us in a very big way in our little communities. We need to know what the rhetoric is that is being spun out there. We, as the Human Relations Council, do not take positions on those issues, but we do have to deal with the aftermath. The quote is as follows: ***"As Governor, my number one obligation and sworn oath is to keep the residents of New Jersey safe. The threat posed to New Jersey by ISIS is very real. I write to inform you that I will not accept any refugees from Syria in the wake of the deadly terrorist attack in Paris."*** (as written by Governor Chris Christie in a letter to President Obama). Rich further commented that "These are folks that live in our communities. We are all immigrants, and it is something that we are going to have to learn to deal with it; all aspects of it as to how they are going to be treated". He noted that there are currently some very historical movements on college campuses nationwide, such as the President of Missouri State resigning in the wake of race issues. The President of the University of Connecticut is meeting with students this week and protesting with them. This has to do with messaging, it has to do with people's feelings, it has to do with levels of tolerance, and it also has to do with us understanding each other, which

is what we do as a Council here. We try to convey that, and we need that representation. We need college campus students here on our Board. We need them to form their own group within our organization that speaks to what their needs are and concerns, so that it can be filtered and those messages disseminated on the state level. That is something we are going to need to look at for next year. Engaging that age group, that segment of society which is so important, and what they are thinking. What is going on had a lot to do with the movements relating to police shootings, and now it has to do with free speech and other activities.

Rich announced that Reisa Sweet, Ocean County HRC, would like to discuss her concerns regarding what has been happening to Jewish students on college campuses. She said that about 54 percent of them have been assaulted, either verbally or physically, if they support the State of Israel, and that Israel has a right to exist. If they are not involved with Israel, they are fine, but those that do support Israel have been assaulted. Students that are Jewish have been very fearful and have stopped wearing stars or identifying themselves as being Jewish. There are periods of time when it gets worse, and it seems that support for them has been very fragile. Rich agreed that everyone should be aware of this, because it is happening across all segments of our society. As with the issue of Syria, and now with the Jewish students, we need to be very cognizant of this, as it relates to the work that we do. We need to be out there educating the people in our communities.

Kay Delp, Vice Chair, reported that the HRC had 3 college interns who worked for us this summer. Two helped to get our database up to date, getting us municipal and county contacts from within the state, chairpersons, etc. A third one worked on her own to get some focus for the Community Outreach Committee. She looked at all of the newspapers and came up with the seven major ones that cover New Jersey, and then she examined the editorials and headline articles for a two week period. She concluded that the majority of the articles fell under the categories of abuse, education, political red tape issues and crime. However, using her definition of "human relations", the most concerning articles were about increasing drug addiction, over-crowding in schools and racism. An article on July 10, 2015, in the Press of Atlantic City, highlights the serious problem of heroin addiction, particularly in southern New Jersey. Ocean, Cape May, and Camden counties are the three worst counties. The next thing was the overcrowding crisis in school. Big issues are lack of school funding, and this does speak to us: the inability of long-time residents to have a say in these important issues because of their citizenship status. Finally, an article in the Press of Atlantic City brings to light the not often discussed problem that many citizens might not be aware of - the continuing existence and activity of white supremacy hate groups throughout New Jersey. Unfortunately, New Jersey is noted for that and has a reputation for that. Hopefully, her findings may assist the Community Outreach Committee as they determine what type of outreach that they are going to do, and they will know what concerns are out there.

Finally, we have written letters of appreciation to give the interns and are having certificates made for them as well. The HRC would like to have interns for next summer. If anyone knows of the availability of interns, please contact Kay. Seton Hall was suggested by Joanne Reilly, as well as Montclair State University.

Old Business

A lengthy discussion followed the request by Kay for clarification of the proposed Leadership Conference tentatively scheduled for May 18, 2016. Last year, the conference was not held because the executive committee was newly elected, and was in the process of getting organized and oriented. The Advisory Board had previously offered to take the lead in making the arrangements. Various venues were discussed, as well as possible formats. Rich suggested that the Council form an ad-hoc committee to do this, since the AB is in flux and the current AB member list is being clarified. He said that a budget for the leadership conference should be put together and forwarded to Elie's office for approval. The conference would be a full day with possibly two morning sessions and 2 afternoon sessions; perhaps including panels. Dr. Laura Morano offered to check with Middlesex County College and Mercer County College about the use of their facilities, because she is a board member for both.

The council discussed concerns about where future HRC meetings would be held. It was agreed that using the NJ State Police Museum was problematic for their security personnel and procedures, as well as presenting difficulties for the public if they wanted to attend. It was decided that the best possible venue was the Justice Hughes Complex, because their security procedures were efficient and thorough, and already in place to accommodate public attendance. Public transportation is available. There is a food court inside the building. Additionally, many council members are already working in that building, and they would save on commuting time. The JH Complex has internet capability and access to media resources. Val Gurba, who provides administrative assistance to the HRC, will make the contacts to reserve an appropriate-sized conference room for meetings after the January 13th HRC meeting at the NJ State Police Museum.

Tawfiq Barqawi told Reisa Sweet and the Council of an organization that he works with, the ADC- The American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, after Reisa spoke of wanting to further address the harassment of students who are Jewish who are attending college. He reported that they receive and address these types of issues nationwide. They have offices in Washington DC. with 5 full time lawyers and 15 employees, and they follow-up on these incidents. They get hundreds of reports from all around and daily complaints. Sometimes they can investigate, sometimes they can't. Their concerns include Latinos, Muslims, Arabs, Jews, African Americans; it is not just a particular community of minorities in this country that are affected.

Rich commented that the HRC has one fully functional committee right now, the Education Committee, which is doing a commendable job. Karen Positan reached out to 93 people to jumpstart the Community Outreach Committee, and she received responses from only 9 people.

Advisory Board Report

Yumiko Mishima reported that the AB had met just prior to this meeting today to re-configure their leadership, because of Steve Landfield's resignation as Chair. The new AB Chair will be Yumiko and the Vice Chair will be Reisa Sweet. They would like to reiterate that they have offered to take on co-ordinating the conference, and to lead that effort. If a committee is being formed, several of the AB members will be signing up to participate. Yumiko offered that, given

the time constraints, they would be able to facilitate a conference centered around issues of gender identity, gender expression and affectual orientation; also LGBTQ issues with an emphases on transgender, as a new issue that a lot of people are interested in. They would also like to see if CEU credits and PD credits could be provided, so that educators and social workers can use this as a professional development tool. In this way, they can get permission from their schools or offices to come for the day and get some professional development credits. Rich said that this could be decided upon after today's meeting. Yumiko asked that the date and place be locked in as soon as possible.

Rich said he would like to make a motion to accept Joe Mazza to the Advisory Board. Joe Mazza was unanimously voted on to the Board. Rich said that Joe has been a tremendous asset and has been working behind the scenes while going for his PhD. He is going to be helping the Seton Hall students to get organized on their project.

Dr. Laura Morano reported for the HRC Education committee. "Briefly, on behalf of the committee, we had a meeting a month ago and then we met once again in my office. We certainly have key goals that we are looking to accomplish. We did have a really good discussion on the New Jersey Department of Education proposed revisions to managing for equity and equality in regulations pretty much, so we are going to have a quick follow-up conversation today regarding the comments that we can offer as a committee, although I have to recuse myself as I do work for the Department of Ed. One of the things that we wanted to bring to you is whether as a Committee, can we submit comments, or offer proposed comments, under proposed regulation on behalf of the committee or the Council? And we have not finalized them yet, but for example, it was pointed out clarifying language that would really benefit kids and families. If we put something in writing, should we e-mail it to you?" Rich responded that the information should be sent here and copied to Phil Freeman, as he is an attorney and has been working on Human Relations for decades. Laura reported that on December 9th they have a meeting with the Assistant Commissioner of Student Support Services and the team. Three other people will come with her as she meets with them to discuss the issues that they have raised around bilingual education and ESL programing. Laura said that nothing else is needed from the HRC at this time, and that she will make a report after the meeting.

New Business

It was noted that the HRC had received a notice in a general e-mail from the Civil and Human Rights Coalition mourning the passing of former EEOC Chair Jacqueline Berrien, who was 54 years old. She was highly thought of and had passed away unexpectedly. An e-mail with the details of the funeral service was sent to all.

Rich said that the HRC requested, again, from the legislature, both sides, and the Governor's office, for more public members to be appointed to the Council, because there are plenty of openings. If anyone has any suggestions for more members, please bring them forth. He is going to be bringing a gentleman from Trenton, Kelly Ramos, who is a young man. He describes him as strong and well spoken. Rich stated that you look at him and he starts talking about domestic violence, and you scratch your head and wonder why he is so into this. The answer is that his sister was killed by her boyfriend. Rich feels that he is a phenomenal asset, he brings a lot, and that he is going to bring him into the fold here because he has a lot to offer to the HRC.

Jahnbaz Almas inquired about what has happened with the funding issue from the Governor. Was there an attempt made? If there was an attempt, why it was rejected, and why we can't just re-create a proposal? This is one of the more fundamental issues of the HRC has done and it started in 1999. Unbelievable, especially after 9-11, we were just a buffer zone before the law enforcement and the community. Kay responded that she and Rich had spent hours going through storage boxes and determining the previous budgeting. Basically, the HRC had approved budgeting for \$200,000 a year, but we lost that in 2008, and never got it back. We did reach out to Senator Sweeney's office this past year, and had a personal phone and e-mail from the liaison who lays out budget proposals and things. They included us in a proposal, it went to the Governor and it was up to the Governor to decide what he was going to fund or not. We did not get anything.

Rich commented by saying, "The other thing is the realization of what's transpired over the years, and we are acutely aware of what the budgetary issues are and what the needs are. And we are going to do the best darn job that we can with what we have -even if that means nothing. The very nice thing about this conversation is at the participatory level is we have a sitting Assemblywoman here. She's here at every meeting- or Jim is here from her office. They get to see what we are doing. They get to see what we are working on. And if it is worth going to bat for, I am sure she will do that for us. And they know the initiatives that we are taking on as well. So we have another voice to go back to the Legislatures office and the Governor's office. The fact of the matter is we fall under the umbrella of the Attorney General's Office. They are the ones that control the finances. They are not used to getting the request. So you know, we are going to get past those hurdles, we are going to make some demands and we are going to get something, whatever, that is to try and fulfill our obligation, because we have a mandate here. Whether it takes X amount of dollars or Y amount of dollars, we are going to get this funded somehow. I assure you that there is no way that the Attorney General's Office is going to turn us down."

Kay mentioned that that the last conference that was put on was done with next to no budget. They used the offices at the Justice Hughes Complex, and no speaker got paid. In the past when there was a budget, and the Governor had approved that budget, it was held at a Holiday Inn, it included coffee and donuts and sometimes a lunch, and it included speakers and workshops. But the last several that were put on were done without any cost.

Tawfiq commented that he wanted to clear something with the budget. He said the HRC was allocated for fewer than \$200,000 dollars, but they never had access to it. It was under Attorney General's Bias Crime Office, and they controlled it. And sometimes they gave us part-time security for the walk. If we had an event, we might have spent \$2,000, not even, but we never had access to that money. I was the Treasurer at the time, and we did not have authorization or authority to spend that. It had to come from the Bias Crime Office. And we never spent more maybe \$10,000 a year, maximum. Kay said that she had located an official spreadsheet that stated how the money was spent. Tawfiq responded that he knew what they used, and it wasn't for the HRC. Rich responded that it's up to the HRC to get that money to come back into the HRC. He assured that he will make every effort to get that money, but the HRC needs to justify what we are going to be doing.

Adjournment

A motion was made and approved to adjourn the meeting at noon.

Respectfully submitted,

Kay Delp

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

NEXT MEETING January 13th, 2016