

## HUMBOLDT COUNTY HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (HRC) MINUTES

Meeting of 11 December 2001

Conference Room A,

Humboldt County Courthouse, Eureka, California

Chair Larry Miller called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

### **A. Attendance and Introduction of Guests**

Present: Shaffer, Taylor, Sloane, Schimps, Miller, Jewell, Lyons, deLeon, Graebner, Intern Blume, Botzler

Excused absence: Eastman, Keele Unexcused absence: None

John Sloane, our new Commissioner, was introduced and welcomed onto the Commission

Guests: County Risk Manager Kim Kerr & 1 other guest

### **B. Approval of Minutes**

Jewell moved (Schimps seconded) approval of the 13 November minutes. Passed with correction of Lyons having an excused absence and Taylor being in attendance

### **C. Public Comment**

1. Risk Manager Kerr informed the Commission that the County was drafting a handicapped program for the Courthouse and each of the County facilities. She emphasized that the current sloped walkway to the 5<sup>th</sup> Street entrance of the Courthouse does meet all codes as it is currently constructed; the walkway has a rise of less than 5%. She also noted that, while not required, the County will install handrails for added security of those using the walkway. Currently, the County expects to have a final proposal for the handicapped program by 1 March 2002, and to implement the changes within a year.

On an unrelated issue, Botzler queried her on implementation of the Mediation First Policy. Kerr responded that the County expects to develop training in customer service skills for key employees in March 2002, and will keep the Commission and Community for Common Ground informed. There is expected to be a follow-up training in May. On further inquiry, Kerr emphasized that there are no plans for mediation training. She noted that the County had no ability to send program heads to mediation and that, further, there was a complaint/grievance procedure in place before any litigation. Kerr also emphasized that mediation per se was not intended as part of the County's recent policy regarding customer service.

2. Later in the meeting, a citizen complained about being unfairly released from a job, having had a book he was writing stolen from him, and of having been treated in an abusive way by a number of people in his home. Lyons agreed to follow up with an intake.

### **D. Correspondence, Contact Reports, and Telephone Calls**

1. Taylor contacted the Homeless coordinator for the Mental Health Branch of the County Health and Human Services department. The coordinator confirmed that for single women, there are only 4 beds at the Rescue Mission available in the county. When asked about reports of police brutality, the coordinator noted that there are some police who regularly are mentioned by homeless as behaving like bullies while enforcing the ordinances. The homeless are very fearful of these men. Both the Eureka Police Department and the Arcata Police Department were mentioned as having some of these men on their staff. Miller interjected that further inquiries of the homeless on the names of these police officers were futile. Considerable discussion followed. One estimate of the number of homeless in the County was placed at an average of 1000 to 1200 on any given day. Miller, Graebner, Lyons, and Taylor will meet with the Eureka Police Chief; Botzler and Taylor will meet with the Arcata Police Chief.
2. Botzler received 5 calls (regarding four issues). One case involved two calls from a woman having interest in attending Commission meetings and perhaps applying for one of the vacancies. A second was from a family whose children allegedly had received discrimination from a teacher at a computer center; this family already was in contact with Legal Services of Northern California and encouraged to continue working with this group. Another call was from a woman who reported she had been subject to domestic violence and falsely imprisoned on the claim of her husband that she had actually committed domestic violence against him; she was referred to Legal Services of Northern California and a discussion was held on whether a citizen's complaint should be filed against the officer who had incarcerated her. Finally there was a (presumably) wrong number from a Sonoma County credit agency seeking information on a person they were trying to contact.
3. Jewell received 4 calls on the Commission answering machine. One was from a woman with a broken leg who lived alone and needed home health care; she was referred. Another case was from a woman complaining about a violent husband and a lack of support from the local law enforcement agency; Jewell was not able to successfully return the call. A third call regarded a renter having a problem

with a landlord; the renter was referred. A fourth call was a follow up of a caller who previously had spoken with another Commissioner (Botzler); Botzler will follow up.

**E. Committees, Liaisons, and Case Reports**

1. Committee on Law Enforcement Matters (Jewell)  
No new information to report
2. Outreach and Education Matters (Shaffer).  
Shaffer reported no new information
3. Finance (Keele) – No report
4. Intern Report (Blume)  
Blume reported that the Humboldt and Del Norte County resource telephone numbers had been updated and passed out copies of the revised list to the Commission. She will forward a copy to Botzler as an e-mail attachment so that they can be stored on everyone's computer as well.
5. For Whom the Bells Toll (Botzler).  
The group will develop a public service announcement of their work in January 2002

**F. Unfinished Business**

1. Miller referred to Taylor's earlier report on his follow-up of the concerns raised by the homeless attending last month's meeting.
2. County Risk Manager Kerr gave an earlier report (see C.1.) regarding the County installation of a handrail.
3. No further report on discussions of human rights issues and the State Superintendent's office.
4. No further discussion on the Commission annual report.
5. Miller reported for Eastman that the County will give a proclamation of Human Rights Month on December 18. Others notifying Eastman of giving proclamations include Trinidad, Blue Lake, Ferndale, and the Weott Tribe.

**G. New Business**

1. January 26 was set for the annual Commission retreat. It will be held at the Botzler home.
2. Discussion of the Boy Scout position on homosexuality was postponed to the next meeting
3. Subcommittee on the HSU Diversity Conference proposal for the nature of the program to the Diversity Conference.
4. Miller will meet with Supervisor Woolley to explore on how to best approach the Board on reinstating the Neutral Observers program.
5. No report on linking of the Commission web page to the County web page.

**H. Adjourn**

With no further business before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, 8 January 2002, 6:00 p.m., Conference Room A, County Courthouse, Eureka

Respectfully submitted,

Rick Botzler, Secretary