

## HUMBOLDT COUNTY HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (HRC) MINUTES

Meeting of 14 May 2002

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: Miller, Jewell, Keele, Schimps, Sloane, Shaffer, Eastman, Aziz, Graebner, deLeon, Lyons, Intern Blume, Botzler

Excused absence: Sloane

Unexcused absence: Taylor

Guests: 2

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

The 9 April 2002 minutes with correction of one typographical error

### **C. Public Comment**

1. Mike Randolph, Senior District Executive for the local Boy Scouts of America (BSA) Redwood Empire Council attended on invitation of the Commission, and responded to the Commission's questions and concerns about the BSA policy toward gay leaders and youth. He explained that there were about 305 councils chartered by the national BSA organization and that each was relatively independent. He stressed the concepts of moral and physical fitness and character building as being central to BSA goals for boys. Randolph noted that the Venturing and Exploring programs also include high school aged girls as well as boys. At heart to the BSA position on gay leaders, he explained, was that adult leaders were expected to model traditional family values and that avowed homosexuals were not believed by BSA to serve as good role models for traditional family values. On questioning, he noted that no clear basis for exclusion of gay leaders had been identified (e.g., the phrase "morally straight"). Randolph did acknowledge that members of some of the more conservative churches might believe that gay leadership was in conflict with the "morally straight" phrase. It was noted by a Commissioner that one could interpret the Scout Oath and Law in a fashion as to not exclude gays, but that the BSA leadership apparently chose to avoid this interpretation. Randolph stated that some parents have expressed a fear of having known gay leaders with boys for extended periods (e.g. camping); however, on questioning, he also acknowledged that pedophiles come from all walks of life and commonly involve men in apparently normal married family relations. He emphasized that there was no intentional anti-gay position advocated in the BSA, but also admitted to not considering that the BSA policy of discriminating against gay leaders could give support to other, more overtly prejudicial, anti-gay groups in society. To his knowledge, there have been no BSA programs addressing homophobia for youth or leaders since the court cases.

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

1. Miller reported that Sloane received 5 telephone calls; 3 involved law enforcement complaint questions, one was a report of unhealthy living conditions, and one was a request for information on meeting time and place for the Commission.
2. Miller received 5 calls. One was from a woman who had given birth to a premature baby at St. Joseph Hospital who believed she had received some discriminatory treatment; Miller was unable to reach her on returning the call. For another, a woman expressed fear that an ex-husband might harm her young daughter. A Strom-Martin aide contacted the voice mail machine; thus far only voice messages have been exchanged. One call was from a citizen interested in learning more about the Commission. One call was from a Humboldt State University (HSU) faculty member requesting the mailing address of the Commission.
3. Botzler had one follow-up meeting at a local coffee shop with a woman complaining about harassment by local law enforcement. After some discussion, she decided not to pursue a formal complaint. Keele reminded Commissioners that all meetings with citizens should involve the presence of at least 2 Commissioners.

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

1. Committee on Law Enforcement Matters (Jewell)  
No new information
2. Outreach and Education Matters (Shaffer).
  - a. Shaffer noted the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) meeting at the Arcata Peace and Justice Center next Tuesday (21 May).

- b. The Humboldt County Office of Education (HCOE) will include the Commission's speaker bureau in its catalogue for fall opportunities for teachers.
3. Finance (Keele) – Current bank balance is \$112.77.
4. Intern Report (Blume)

Intern Blume organized a directory for resources phone lists. She has the HRC brochure and all directories on disk now. This will be her last meeting as she is graduating this semester.
5. Follow-up on previous case reports
  - a. A case of a blind woman denied assistance at a local food store felt resolved.
  - b. The Eureka Housing Authority is requesting the court to decide the issue regarding a tenant who has been using medical marijuana in federally-supported housing.
6. Other reports

Miller spoke on the topic of local law enforcement agencies at a meeting of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

#### **F. Unfinished Business**

1. Miller reported that placing of the Neutral Observers program back onto the Board of Supervisors agenda was complicated. Supervisor Woolley explained that Board items voted down cannot be placed back before the Board unless one of the opponents raises that issue. Reference was made to the 26 April Times-Standard headline of Pacific Lumber Company airing fears about logging protests, including a suggestion by PL President Robert Manne to acquire federal Homeland Security money to combat the "eco-terrorists" in the area; such concerns give added support for re-implementation of the Neutral Observers program.
2. The letter representing the Commission position on the death penalty was sent to the Board of Supervisors. The letter to the Supervisors also included a request for the County Counsel's opinion on the impact of SB 381 on activities of the Commission
3. Blume and Schimps reported on the 6 May rally of the HSU Human Rights group. The HRC brochure generated interest among those attending. Schimps addressed two concerns of attending citizens. One was for a woman in a possibly abusive relationship who was not receiving adequate support. One was from a person believing that local law enforcement officials were arresting mentally ill homeless people.
4. Eastman and Jewell drafted a possible web page. Miller spoke with Greg Gehr who volunteered to assist with developing web page for the Commission.
5. There was some discussion of the BSA position reported by Mike Randolph. It was noted that the fear of gay leaders being with boys for extended periods (e.g., camping trips) comes from a prejudice that gay men are more inclined than other groups to molest children. As a start to a follow-up, it was suggested to contact members of the gay community to find whether there are known local cases of people who have experienced exclusion from the BSA based on sexual orientation.

#### **G. New Business**

1. It was proposed that the new intern be involved on some literature reviews, make contact with the Petaluma troop that withdrew from the BSA program, and conduct some additional research to assist the Commission in developing a position on the BSA policy toward gays. Profs. Betsy Watson and Pam Brown will be contacted for possible nominations of a new intern.
2. June is election month, and a possible slate of officers was discussed

#### **H. Adjourn**

With no further business before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, 11 June 2002, 6:00 p.m. in Conference Room A of the County Courthouse, Eureka.

Respectfully submitted,

Rick Botzler, Secretary