

HUMBOLDT COUNTY HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (HRC) MINUTES

Meeting of 14 January 2003

Conference Room A

Humboldt County Courthouse, Eureka, California

Chair Maura Eastman called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

A. Attendance and Introduction of Guests

Present: Eastman, Lochtie, Lyons, Miller, Schimps, deLeon, Sloane, Jewell, J. Shaffer, Botzler

Excused absence: Graebner, Aziz, Intern Loveman

Unexcused absence: B. Schaeffer

Guests: 4

B. Approval of Minutes

Lochtie moved (Sloane seconded) that the 10 December 2002 minutes be accepted with a minor typographical correction. Passed unanimously

C. Public Comment

1. One guest requested Commission support for a bill by Representative M. Thompson that would give her status as a permanent resident. She also requested that the Commission serve as a non-profit organization for fund-raising purposes. These requests will be considered at the next meeting.
2. One guest claimed discrimination as a practitioner of Falun Gong. Sloane volunteered to conduct an intake.
3. One guest, Christina Albright, American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), distributed a cover sheet used by the ACLU for those being questioned by the FBI as part of an effort to help cities and counties counter possible excesses of the Patriot Act; she requested that this item be considered on the next Commission agenda. The ACLU also is seeking updated statistics from the county's risk manager to assess the cost of claims made against the Sheriff's Department. The ACLU is following up with public record requests of law enforcement agencies in an effort to identify possible racial profiling. Albright received a copy of a letter from Sheriff Phelps sent to a woman complaining about "manhandling" by the Sheriff's Department, as well as a letter from the woman complainant disputing the Sheriff's findings. Finally, the ACLU is undergoing a major reorganization in Humboldt County.

D. Correspondence, Contact Reports, and Telephone Calls

1. J. Shaffer reported on a telephone call on the Commission voice mail from a man complaining about law enforcement, but leaving no details or contact information for possible follow-up.
2. Botzler received 30 telephone calls on the Commission voice mail, of which 27 calls were related to 12 distinct cases; 3 calls were hang-ups or contained insufficient information for follow-up. Number of calls related to each topic follows in parentheses
 - a. An Arcata man precluded from medical marijuana will seek legal assistance (2 calls)
 - b. A male claimed a lack of follow-up by his employer regarding a case of sexual harassment. Was unable to contact caller for further information. (1)
 - c. A man needing to prove U.S. citizenship for Section 8 Housing was referred to Lyons (1)
 - d. A Eureka woman claimed her welfare checks had been stolen by Adult Protective Services staff and was not being supported by the Sheriff. She raised several other concerns. Eastman, Lyons, and Aziz will conduct an intake. (7)
 - e. A woman claimed police brutality by Arcata Police Department was mailed a citizen's complaint form and some local legal resource numbers. (2)
 - f. The Civil Liberties monitoring project requested and was given our mailing address (1)
 - g. A Eureka woman claimed her son had been bullied and mistreated by teachers and administrators in a local school system. Discussion with the school principal resulted in conflicting information. After some discussion, the woman was encouraged to address her concerns further with the State Department of Education, participate in mediation, and/or confer with an attorney; she has met briefly with an attorney. It was evident there are no free legal services in the area available for low-income families for this kind of problem. (4)
 - h. The clerk of the Board of Supervisors referred a number to the Commission that had been left on her voice mail. (1)
 - i. A Taiwanese woman whose children had been kidnapped in Taiwan was invited to present her case to the full commission (see Public Comments, above). (3)
 - j. A woman who made a complaint of brutality to the Sheriff's Department received an unsatisfactory letter from the Sheriff. A copy has been sent to the Commission (see Albright reference to same case under Public Comments, above) (2)

k. A gay man reported being a victim of hate incidents by another individual, and was considering presenting his case to the Commission. Since the District Attorney's office was considering prosecution, he agreed to wait for the D.A.'s decision before pursuing the case further with the Commission. (2)

l. Jessica Pierce, Food for People, called to clarify on whether she could present for her organization. She was invited to participate during the Public Comment period. (1)

3. Eastman report that President Casey Crabill, College of the Redwoods (C-R), responded to the Commission's concern about the United Way support for Boy Scouts (BSA) since the BSA has a national policy of excluding openly gay men from participation. President Crabill noted that the College did not directly support the BSA position, but also did not want to withdraw from United Way participation. She noted that participation by C-R staff was voluntary.

E. Committees, Liaisons, and Case Reports

1. Committee on Law Enforcement Matters (Jewell)
No new information
2. Outreach and Education Matters (Shaffer).
 - a. Shaffer asked whether any of the commissioners was willing to exercise a leadership role in developing a new Community Forum on Race.
3. Finance. The current bank balance is \$112.77.
4. Other reports
None.

F. Unfinished Business

1. Neutral Observers Program
Miller reported no new information
2. Commission Web Page.
Eastman contacted webmaster, Greg Gehr, but had not yet received a response
3. Death Penalty memo to Supervisors.
Eastman has met with Supervisor Neely and is planning to have Commission concerns presented to the Board of Supervisors.
4. Letters regarding United Way and Boy Scouts.
Eastman reported response from President Crabill above. No further information from Humboldt State University or the Board of Supervisors has been received.
5. Revised HRC ordinance
Eastman reported that no change in status has occurred yet
6. Support for Mexican identification cards.
Eastman reported that the additional material from Supervisor Neely and Santiago Cruz has not yet arrived.
7. Role of liaisons (Miller)
Revised list of law enforcement liaisons was distributed, and also will be distributed by e-mail
8. Intern report.
None

G. New Business

1. The annual retreat will be a strictly social gathering, giving the commissioners a chance to better know each other.
2. A sign-up sheet for monitoring the Commission answering machine was circulated.

H. Adjourn

With no further business before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, 11 February 2003, 6:00 p.m. in Conference Room A of the County Courthouse, Eureka.

Respectfully submitted,

Rick Botzler, Secretary Pro Tem