STATE HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

WILMINGTON & DOVER, DELAWARE

**THURSDAY, AUGUST 11, 2011**

The August monthly meeting of the Delaware Human Relations Commission was held by video-conference at the Cannon Building, 861 Silver Lake Boulevard, Conference Room A, in Dover, Delaware; and the Carvel Building, 820 N. French Street, 4th Floor Executive Conference Room, Wilmington, Delaware. The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Calvin Christopher at 7:00 p.m., followed by a period of silent meditation.

**COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT**

**New Castle County Location**: Chairperson Calvin Christopher and Commissioners Whittona Burrell, Chok-fun Chui, Olga Ramirez, and Bob Watson, Jr. were present.

**Kent County Location**: Vice-Chairperson Gail Launay and Commissioners Wallace Dixon, Doug James, and Rosemarie Williams were present.

**COMMISSION MEMBERS NOT PRESENT**

Executive Committee members Bill Johnston and Steve Elkins were excused. Full Commission members Mashoor Awad, Nathan Barnett, Jamaal Bivens, Diaz Bonville, Bernice Edwards, Earnest Gulab, Marian Harris, Prameela Kaza, Nancy Maihoff, Lorenzo Murdaugh, Lois Myers, Eli Ramos, Peter Schott, Richard Senato, and Jamie Wolfe were excused.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

Chairperson Christopher asked for approval of the June minutes. Commissioner Ramirez made a motion to accept the June minutes and Commissioner Dixon seconded the motion. All were in favor. None opposed. Motion carried.

**MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC PRESENT**

None

**CHAIRPERSON’S REPORT**

Chairperson Christopher

**SHRC 50th Year Celebration**

Chairperson Christopher said he would like to see the proposed activities for this event put on a yearly calendar so they can be properly attended, not only by Commissioners but also people that are invited. He said notices need to go out in advance if the Commission wants this event to be a success.

Chairperson Christopher said he felt it was important to give the Distinguished Lifetime Service Award out this year. He said he would like to see this award given out at one of the year’s celebratory events. He said he would defer more discussion about this to the committee that is working on it.

**Appointment/Re-appointment Process**

Chairperson Christopher said he has been working with the Community Response Committee and the Governor’s office on the documented process for the appointments and re-appointments to the Commission.

Earlier today a draft of the proposed documentation procedure was sent to the Executive committee for their review. Chairperson Christopher said since the Community Response Committee has been working on this he will defer to them to bring everyone up to date on the process.

Commissioner Chui said all members of the committee received copies of the revised appointment/re-appointment process, as well as a letter of response to applicants. She said her committee went over it line-by-line and feel there are loopholes to fill.

Commissioner Maihoff said the committee began by looking at the resignation process. The question the committee has is who a resigning Commissioner sends their letter of resignation to. Chairperson Christopher said the resignation letter should be sent to the Governor’s office. Commissioner Chui asked the difference between the Governor’s office and the Department of State. She said they seem to be referring to both as the same thing. Director Fullman said they are two distinct offices. She said the Governor has the appointing authority so the resignation letter should go to him. She said the Governor’s office will notify the Department of State’s office of the resignation, and they will in turn notify the Commission.

The proposed process was discussed and Commissioners Johnston and Launay had questions regarding the wording of the new process. One of their concerns was whether or not any standing Commissioners could be replaced with a new Commissioner without regard to their current commitment and standing on the Commission. Other Commissioners had an issue with how each Commissioner is listed in the Governor’s office under only one category, such as only listing their race, or sexual orientation, for instance. Many Commissioners said they feel there is more than one category they could be listed under; thereby more groups they can help in Delaware.

It was agreed the Community Response Committee would meet again to look over the proposed process and possibly meet with the Governor’s office again to get answers to questions they may have.

**DIRECTOR’S REPORT**

**SHRC 50th Year Dinner / Event**

Director Fullman said there will be a training and reception on September 19, 2011 for current and former State Human Relations Commissioners. The first part of the evening will be to give a fair housing training update and provide content of why the Commission exists and how the laws have changed to include the protected categories that have been added, and then proceed into a reception. An address list for former Commissioners is currently being worked on. Other details such as transportation issues still need to be worked out. Commissioner Launay mentioned that it may be a long drive for people in Sussex County that wish to attend and Director Fullman reminded everyone that this dinner is only one of many events being planned in all three counties for the year. Chairperson Christopher said it would be good to create a calendar of events with specific information.

**Investigator Certification**

Director Fullman said IOHRHA and HUD’s training academy have worked on a program that would give certification to Investigators that would recognize the professional development and the skills of knowledge that is required to do the work of investigating matters of civil rights. Investigator Ines Hungria will be taking the very first class for certification.

**DCW/DHR Budget**

Director Fullman passed out copies of the combined budgets of the Delaware Commission for
Women and the Division of Human Relations. She asked Commissioners to review the information and said she will talk more about the budget at the next meeting. She said she felt it important that the Commission be clear about the budget; especially as they continue to plan events for the coming year and beyond. Director Fullman stressed that Commissioner Launay’s visit to the JFC hearing during the last fiscal year was very important to weigh in on the resources that are needed. She said the Secretary of State’s office has combined both the Division of Human Relations and the Office for the Commission for Women, and the budgets have been combined and reduced as well. The budget information shows the Division budgets when they were separate and a current combined budget which became effective July 1, 2011. Money that has come from HUD for case closings and special grants are earmarked specifically for Housing only. She said the Commission can go online to the site for the Office of Management and Budget to view these budgets in greater detail.

**Redistricting Forum**

Director Fullman said the redistricting forum was an opportunity that was presented to the Legislative Committee, a redistricting plans bill that had been submitted for the House and the Senate. Commissioner Burrell was available and prepared to talk fundamentally about what redistricting is by looking at the census data and developing lines around that. An educational forum was scheduled; however, it was a week before the session ended and a week before there was going to be a vote on the redistricting plans. The forum was considered to be too close to those dates and might be perceived as drawing attention to the redistricting plans so it did not go forward and was canceled on the day it was to happen. Director Fullman said promoting the event gave visibility to the Commission, and she feels in the future people will look to partner with the Commission on issues such as this.

**SHRC Committee Meetings and Reports**

Director Fullman emphasized the need to have committee schedules so they can be posted as public meetings. She asked Chairperson Christopher to encourage the Committee chairs to prepare written reports so there can be a record of them as required. She said this would also help new Commissioners decide what committees they would like to join. Director Fullman proposed that an actual formal orientation process be created.

**Protected Classes**

Director Fullman said after recently attending a meeting she had a discussion afterward with Ruth Sothelowsky who asked if the Commission could convene a discussion to have ‘source of income’ added as a protected class. Director Fullman said she has also had the same conversation recently with Matt Heckles, of the State Housing Authority. She said people are having trouble getting housing because they can’t use certain types of income; such as, vouchers, child support payments, etc.

**Upcoming Events**

Director Fullman put a list of upcoming events in the Commission packet. She said DCW and DHR are signed up for these events so they can be out in the community and establishing relationships and talking to people about the laws against discrimination. She asked the Commission for their assistance at these events. Director Fullman said if their community, or any organization they are affiliated with, is sponsoring any event to please let the office know.

At the end of Director Fullman’s report Commissioner Johnston asked her several questions about the budget and said he was disappointed in the drop in funding. Director Fullman explained more about the current budget and said if the Commission wants to have ongoing projects and events they will need a budget to support them. She suggested the Commission get involved during the budget process.

**Analysis of Impediment Study**

Director Fullman said the Analysis of Impediments report will be released on August 16th. She said they want ‘us’ to be available to train government officials and we are prepared to do that. This analysis is intended to let us know if there is segregation where there is race, culture, and income going on in our state. HUD requires the AI report to show what the communities look like. This is a real opportunity to show Delawareans there is a body that will protect their rights. Director Fullman said there needs to be a committee that really works on the report extensively. Commissioner Johnston asked if the Analysis of Impediments results are something that should be showcased at the September event. Director Fullman said it may be possible if it is ready by then.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Public Awareness: (Doug James, Chairperson)**

* Comcast Newsmakers – Commissioner Launay did two interviews on June 17th which will be aired very soon.
* Humanities Forum Grant – The grant application was rejected due to there not being ‘enough Humanities Scholars involved in the project’. Committee to continue to work on this issue.
* Beach Life Magazine – Commissioner James said the committee is working on getting an article written in the magazine about former Commissioner Harold Truxon.

**Equal Employment Opportunity Committee: (Gail Launay, Chairperson)**

* Commissioner Launay explained the Governor’s Council on Equal Employment Opportunity committee has staff that takes minutes of each meeting which are forwarded to Director Fullman.
* Meetings for June and July were both canceled.
* Committee has finished their report.
* Currently working on recommendations for the Governor regarding new legislation that could impact the state; such as sexual orientation, with regard to benefits for same sex marriages.
* At the meeting in May the committee worked on revising reporting processes. There were seven attachments of documents that were sent to state agencies.

**Legislative Committee**: **(Stephen Elkins, Chairperson)**

Commissioner Johnston gave the report in Commissioner Elkins’ absence.

* Commissioner Johnston said he has heard there may be an effort to add sexual identity/transgender as a protected class to certain laws. He said the effort most likely would be to first add it to the hate crime statute.

**Community Response Committee: (Chok-Fun Chui, Chairperson)**

* Appointments and Re-appointment Process – Discussed at length at beginning of Commission meeting.
* Re-appointment Eligibility
	+ Commissioner Chui said the Governor’s office has requested when sending a letter recommending re-appointment of Commissioners, the eligibility of the Commissioner being suggested for re-appointment be detailed in the letter.
		- Currently the committee will be looking at attendance at monthly meetings, committee meetings, hearings, and education and outreach events.
* The Gaming Industry
	+ Commissioner Chui reminded the Commission that a letter had been sent to the Delaware Gaming Industry requesting information detailing the diversity in their workforce. The deadline of submission of this data was July 15, 2011. Both the Harrington Casino and Dover Downs Casino have requested more time in submitting the information. Commissioner Chui said a lawyer representing Dover Downs sent a letter questioning the Commission’s right to ask for such data. Commissioner Chui said she will meet with Deputy Attorney General Gadbois regarding this issue.

**OLD BUSINESS**

None

**NEW BUSINESS**

None

**ADJOURNMENT**

A motion to adjourn was made, seconded, and approved at 8:35 p.m.