STATE HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

**FULL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

DOVER, DELAWARE

**THURSDAY, September 11, 2014**

The September monthly meeting of the Delaware State Human Relations Commission was held by video-conference the Cannon Building, 861 Silver Lake Boulevard, Conference Room A, Dover, Delaware; and the Carvel Building, 820 N. French Street, 4th Floor Executive Conference Room, Wilmington, Delaware.

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**Attendance:**

**Commission Members Present:** Chairperson Calvin Christopher. Commissioners Mashoor Awad, Diaz Bonville, Whittona Burrell, Erica Caesar, Chok-Fun Chui, Stephen Elkins, Earnest Gulab, Rose Mary Hendrix, Doug James, Gail Launay-Tarlecki, Nancy Maihoff, Lorenzo Murdaugh, Olga Ramirez, Walter Smith Jr., Roy Sudler Jr., Robert Watson Jr., and Rosemarie Williams.

**Commission Members not present:**  Commissioners Bernice Edwards (excused), Dr. J. Michael Harpe (excused), Prameela Kaza (unexcused), and Misty Seemans (excused).

**Staff from Division of Human Relations Office:** Romona Fullman and Vincent Petroff

**Members of the public present:** Rosalyn J. Allen Echols, Gai Allen, James Parson and Sandra Dean-Weldon.

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**I Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Christopher at 7:10 p.m., followed by a period of silent meditation.

**II Approval of Minutes**

The minutes for the June SHRC meeting were submitted. Commissioner Dixon made motion to approve minutes; Commissioner Ramirez seconded motion. A vote was taken. Commissioner Sudler voted not to approve. Motion carried.

The minutes for the July SHRC meeting were submitted. Commissioner Caesar made motion to approve minutes; Commissioner Sudler seconded motion. A vote was taken. Motion carried unanimously.

The minutes for the August SHRC meeting were submitted. Commissioner Smith made motion to approve minutes; Commissioner Dixon seconded motion. A vote was taken. Motion carried unanimously.

**III Members of the Public Present**

Rosalyn J. Allen Echols spoke on behalf of the members of the public that were present. She is a working with a group of citizens from the Jimtown community in Sussex County, DE that are being affected by a proposed development. The community feels that there is a racial bias in the decision making process. Ms. Echols claims the developer has attempted to entice members of the community to hook up to water and sewer. In addition to the water and sewer there are proposals for a sidewalk and street lighting. The citizens would be negatively impacted by the proposed development. They would like the Commission look into the matter and address this with the county. Several Commissioners asked questions of Ms. Echols concerning the racial make-up of the community, what actions the community has taken since the proposal of the development and the response from the ACLU concerning the claim. Chair Christopher thanked Ms. Echols and advised that a package has been received and advised that the Commission will look at the information that was submitted and do additional research to determine if the matter falls within the jurisdiction of the Commission. Vincent Petroff spoke concerning a package of information that he has received from Ms. Echols. He have the items scanned and make hard copies of the information to be potentially used once Chair Christopher makes a determination on the course of action to be taken.

**IV Chair’s Report**

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| ***Topic / Discussion*** | ***Actions to be Taken*** | ***Leaders*** | ***Due Date*** |
| FOIA – Chair Christopher discussed FOIA. Additional training will be forthcoming.  Chair Christopher introduced DAG Stacey Stewart to the Commission. DAG Catherine Damavandi has resigned from the Attorney General’s office. The hiring process for a replacement has begun. FOIA training will be handled by DAG Edward Black.  Director Fullman advised FOIA training is scheduled on Saturday, September 27 at 10:00 am in Dover. Director Fullman asked that Commissioners submit their FOIA questions.  Currently there are 5 vacancies on the Commission. Chair Christopher and Commissioner Maihoff participated in a conference call with the Boards and Commissions office concerning the change of information being provided to the CRC as part of the application process. This change was attributed to FOIA. Additional information will be provided during the report from the CRC. | FOIA training to be held 10:00 a.m. on 9/27/14.  Commissioners submit their FOIA questions | DAG Edward Black  All Commissioners | By Monday, 9/15/14 |
| Chair Christopher advised that Commissioner Senato has resigned from the Commission. | Replace Commissioner Senato on SHRC and GCEEO | Commissioner Maihoff |  |
| Coalition for Fairness and Equality in Schools –The Commission has joined the Coalition. Chair Christopher reported that Director Fullman, Commissioner Ramirez and Chui have attended meetings with the Coalition. | Maintain engaged participation in the work of the Coalition | Director Fullman | Monthly |
| Dover Human Relations Commission – Chair Christopher reported that on 9/23/14 Commissioner Launay-Tarlecki will attend their meeting to provide information on processes of the Commission. | Attend a meeting with the Dover Human Relations Commission. | Commissioner Launay-Tarlecki | September 23, 2014 |
| Chair Christopher and Director Fullman met with group seeking information on the role and responsibilities of the SHRC relative civil rights. Additional information will be provided during the Director’s report. | Schedule follow-up meeting | Chair Christopher, Director Fullman | October 2014 |

**V Director’s Report**

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| ***Topic / Discussion*** | ***Actions to be Taken*** | ***Leaders*** | ***Due Date*** |
| Budget – Director Fullman provided information concerning the budget in the Director’s report. At this time there is approximately $26,000-$27,000 available in the Contractual Services budget line for the current fiscal year. These funds are shared between the SHRC and the Commission for Women. She requested that Commissioners advise of potential need for funds so that they may be reviewed for encumbering. | Provide funding requests to Director Fullman | All Commissioners | Ongoing |
| Director Fullman advised the Commission that Claudia Sosa-Ducote’ has been hired for the Sussex County Investigator position. | Arrange for SHRC members to meet Claudia in person. |  |  |
| Civil Rights Inquiry – hosted a meeting with a small group of concerned citizens considering the need for an office of civil rights. The meeting was constructive. A follow-up meeting will be scheduled for October. |  |  |  |
| FOIA Training – Director Fullman will send an invitation for the training. All Commissioners should plan to attend. The training will be posted on the public calendar. | Flyer to be sent | Director Fullman | Undefined |
| Hearing Dates – The full cooperation of Commissioners is requested regarding timely responses to requests to service on hearing panels. Over the coming months several cases will be scheduled for a hearing. Commissioners who have had limited or no experience serving on a panel are likely to be asked to serve as panelists. More experienced Commissioners will be asked chair the panels. All commissioners (especially recent appointees) are welcomed and encouraged to audit scheduled hearings.  Vincent Petroff provided information concerning cases pending for hearings. There are approximately 7 cases pending to be scheduled for hearings. Dates of hearings will be communicated once scheduled. The Division currently has 77 complaints filed. In that number there are 41 Housing and 36 Equal Accommodation complaints.  Commission Launay-Tarlecki expressed concern over the lack of decision being issued concerning a hearing she recently on.  Commissioner Launay-Tarlecki expressed additional concerns over the number of complaints and the Division’s staffing of 3 Investigators. She will organize an effort to have her concerns over the budget/staffing addressed but would like the assistance of the Commission.  Commissioner Sudler inquired about the merger of the DHR and DCW- when and why? | Hearings to be scheduled  Dates to be communicated  Division to process inquiries and complaints of discrimination  Submit a request to the Commission for assistance in address budget/staffing concerns to Calvin. | Vincent Petroff  Kelly Fox  Division staff  Commissioner Launay-Tarlecki | Ongoing  Ongoing  Ongoing  Undefined |
| Coalition for Fairness & Equity in Schools **–** Director Fullman and several SHRC members attended the August 28th meeting of the Coalition held in Wilmington. Among other things the Coalition seeks to eliminate disparities in the discipline policies and practices in the state’s public schools. The SHRC/DHR has been asked to assist with a re-examination of HB 85. |  |  |  |

**VI Committee Reports**

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| ***Topic / Discussion*** | ***Actions to be Taken*** | ***Leader*** | ***Due Date*** |
| Legislative Committee – Commissioner Caesar reported that the Committee did not meet. |  |  |  |
| Community Response (CRC)– Commissioner Maihoff reported that she met with Lydia Prigg and Monique Hampton of the Governor’s office and received recommended changes/updates to the SHRC by-laws.  Director Fullman is working on a PowerPoint presentation for use in educating the public on the role, duties and responsibilities of the SHRC.  The CRC will continue to monitor commissioner compliance with attendance requirement and will increase the performance of its role with complaints and investigations of discrimination and recommendations to the full Commission.  Information on current SHRC vacancies was presented followed by discussion on the review and recommendation process.  The CRC is developing a strategy for investigating an issue from the spring regarding a non-academic student group at Cape Henlopen HS being denied the opportunity to wear group stoles at high school graduation ceremonies. She has not received a response.  A recommendation was made to update the SHRC by-laws regarding protected classes. | Review and update SHRC by-laws  Send a draft of the process to Chair Christopher and the Governor’s office for review.  Draft of letter to the principal and superintendent of the Cape Henlopen School District to be written. Draft to be sent to Chair Christopher and Director Fullman for review.  Letter to be sent | Chair Christopher  Commissioner Maihoff  DHR staff  Commissioner Maihoff | Undefined  Undefined  Undefined |
| GCEEO – Commissioner Launay-Tarlecki reported that a meeting was held on 8/21/14. During that meeting it was announced that the 2014 report was sent to the Governor’s office and subsequently made available to the public. The Committee also established their review process for coming year. November and December are their review months. This year the GCEEO will review the following departments: Department of State, Department of Finance, DNREC and Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families.  Next meeting is 9/18/14 will be a full day retreat. They will be looking at the strategic plan of the committee. | GCEEO 2014 report to be sent electronically. | Commissioner Launay-Tarlecki | Upon availability |
| Public Awareness – Commissioner James reported that he is looking for financing the Vanishing Voices film to be made. The Committee is in need of $7500.00 for the project. Commissioner James recommended that $3750.00 be made available in the DHR/SHRC budget for the project.  Commissioner Sudler requested clarification on whether or not information and reports submitted to the SHRC during the regular monthly become part of the meeting record. DAG Ed Black (FOIA expert) will be consulted.  There was discussions about appropriate follow-up communications with individuals/groups that present matters to the SHRC during the public comment portion of the regular monthly meetings. | Submit update to 2011funding proposal to Director Fullman | Public Awareness Committee | Undefined |

**VII Old Business**

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| ***Topic / Discussion*** | ***Actions to be Taken*** | ***Leader*** | ***Due Date*** |
| Commissioner Maihoff made an inquiry concerning the discussion that occurred during the August Executive Committee concerning the Commissioner initiated complaint process. No progress has been made at this time. |  |  |  |

**VIII New Business**

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| ***Topic / Discussion*** | ***Actions to be Taken*** | ***Leader*** | ***Due Date*** |
| Commissioner Ramirez inquired as to a follow-up to the fair housing issues presented to the Commission tonight by Ms. Echols. Supervisor Vincent Petroff advised that the DHR will support the SHRC in determining the appropriate next steps. Information delivered to the DHR office will be shared with the CRC for review.. | Information provided by Ms. Echols to be provided to CRC.  CRC to review information and determine course of action. | Vincent Petroff/Kelly Fox  CRC | Undefined  Undefined |

**IX Good News**

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| ***Topic / Discussion*** | ***Actions to be Taken*** | ***Leader*** | ***Due Date*** |
| None |  |  |  |

**XI Meeting Adjourned**

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:15 p.m. by Commissioner Launay-Tarlecki.