

PITTSBURGH COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS

Minutes of Meeting

November 1, 2004

Attendance: B. J. Samson, *Chair*

Rev. Lou Vallone
David Engel
Stephan Broadus

Dr. Barbara Burstin
Robert McClenahan
Curtis Smith

Rev. Tim Smith
Elizabeth Pittinger

Called/Unable to attend:

Alma Speed Fox
Christine Williams

Dr. Susan Hunt

Staff:

Charles F. Morrison, *Director*
Connie Miskis Zatek Yancy Miles
K. Trower, *Solicitor*

Guests:

Louis Boykins, Jr., Governor's Office
David Goldberg, Controller's Office
Dr. Frances Barnes

I. CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner B. J. Samson, Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:35 p.m.

II. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Minutes of the October Commission meeting were unanimously adopted as mailed upon motion of Commissioner McClenahan and second by Commissioner Broadus.

III. STAFF & COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Contract Compliance

Compliance Supervisor, Yancy Miles, reported that a 2005 contract has not been received from the EEOC and is not expected until early in 2005. As a quorum was not established for the Compliance Review Section meeting in October, cases were not able to be presented and were held over for today's meeting. A full report will be made at the December meeting.

B. Director's Report

1. Advertisements are now being carried on 300 Port Authority vehicles routed within the City of Pittsburgh. (A sample of the poster-size ad was available for Commissioners to view.) The advertisements are being displayed immediately behind the bus driver and will continue to be posted there for several months.
2. The Cable Bureau has updated the Commission video which runs periodically on the City's Cable Channel. As it was not possible to completely redo the audio portion of the video, graphics were added to the "page" listing the different bases. The video runs approximately four minutes and focuses on housing discrimination.

This video will also become part of the consumer orientation package used by the Housing Authority for the Housing Choice voucher program recipients. It will be used in conjunction with a Powerpoint presentation on the Fair Housing Act. The Director stated that he is looking to train Housing Authority personnel to be the message givers during the normal part of their orientation program.

3. The Commission was asked to provide input as a community organization into the City's Consolidated Plan (5-year plan). The City's Planning Department had coordinated information for this Plan in the past, but since the department has been reduced in size, this work has been contracted out to a vendor – Mullin & Lonergan Associates, Inc. A survey was either mailed or e-mailed to all Commissioners. Responses are to be returned before November 8th.

Commissioner Engel stated that he would like to speak directly with the vendor and the Director provided him with the telephone number of Lee Mueller at Mullin and Lonergan Associates, Inc.

Commissioner Samson raised concern about the short comment period open to the Commission and the questionable format of the survey. However, she encouraged the Commissioners to respond and in particular, asked Commissioner Engel to summarize his conversation with Lee Mueller in writing so that it can be shared with the entire Commission later.

Director Morrison stated that a public hearing is required on this subject. Commissioner Engel indicated that he knew of several persons who would be interested in testifying in the area of disabilities.

4. Director Morrison reported that he is in the process of working out an advertising campaign with UPN-TV which will run March through May on the local Pittsburgh station as part of the Commission's Fair Housing Month push. He had investigated the possibility of also buying advertising on bus shelters, but the cost is prohibitive. Funding for these activities is primarily supported by partnership funds granted by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.
5. The Director attended a recent meeting at the Manchester Citizens Corporation in which the main topic of discussion was the community's concern over the apparent lack of minority representation on construction projects currently in progress on the North Side. As a next step, the group intends to meet with the general contractors involved.

They are also checking into any affirmative action requirements that may be involved as some of the land was provided by the City/County Stadium and Exhibition Authority. According to reports submitted to the City's Equal Opportunity Review Commission, minority participation on these projects is at 18%. This can be in the form of suppliers and/or personnel and may be in later stages of the construction of the interior. It was noted that local minority contractors are not large enough to handle structural steel erection, but may be found working on interior projects.

Concern was also raised at the meeting that young people apparently are not interested or academically prepared to go into the trades. A suggestion was made that a pre-apprenticeship program be established to help prepare people for apprenticeship. Young people are unaware of the value of the apprenticeship program of earning while learning.

IV. GUEST SPEAKER

Commissioner Samson introduced Louis Boykins, Jr., Deputy Director of the Governor's Southwest Regional Office, who accepted her invitation to speak to the Commission in an effort to keep them abreast of various activities in the community.

Mr. Boykins explained that the Governor's Southwest Regional Office has two deputy directors and one director, Bob O'Connor. It encompasses 16 counties, eight of which fall under his direction. He indicated that his office is primarily interested in economic development, noting that one of the Governor's mandates is improved employment opportunities.

Mr. Boykins stated that his office also works with 501c(3) and c(4) organizations, especially in regard to the General Service Surplus Program. Pennsylvania is one of nine states participating in such a program and has an abundance of supplies, vehicles, etc. available to help certain organizations and non-profit groups. He encouraged Commissioners to contact him for applications, which he will assist in completing and processing. Once a Pennsylvania application is approved, it is also dual-filed with the federal surplus program.

Distribution warehouses are located in both Pittsburgh and Hermitage. Small fees apply for purchase, but the amount varies depending on the product and the quantity available.

Mr. Boykins also indicated that he often represents the Governor at speaking engagements and can present proclamations as required. His office also works very closely with the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission, as well as with senators and legislators of both the Democratic and Republican parties. The Governor's Southwest Regional Office is located on the 14th Floor of the State Office Building.

In commenting on the Director's report of the Manchester Community meeting, Mr. Boykins indicated that Attorney Peter Speaks is responsible for contract compliance in Pennsylvania. He works out of Harrisburg but is often in Pittsburgh. Christina Jumba, a former investigator with the Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations, works in the Governor's office with contract bids and applications. Mr. Boykins also commented that a lot of young men may be kept out of construction job in two ways:

- (1) They are afraid to apply for a job because of drug testing requirements
- and (2) They are afraid of getting "branded" if they fail at one job.

V. NEW BUSINESS / ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Samson announced that as Chair of the Commission she would be implementing a new process whereby visitors to the Commission meetings may voice comments at the end of each meeting. As Dr. Barnes, former Commission member, was present at today's meeting, the Chair asked if she would like to address the Commission.

1. Dr. Barnes stated that she expected that the Commission would be acting on a letter she had recently sent to the Chair and the Director asking for permission to continue to work on the student housing educational manual, It's Your Move. The Chair responded that she has not had an opportunity to review this request with the Executive Committee but would get back to Dr. Barnes soon.

Dr. Barnes engaged in further comment by reading from a prepared statement that indicated that she had initiated work on the manual and is committed to seeing the project through to completion. She is also open to developing other fair housing projects to assist the Commission.

Commissioner Samson pointed out to Dr. Barnes that she is no longer a member of the Commission, and although the Commission is very interested in completing the manual, it will require that another Commissioner also be assigned to oversee the project. Such an assignment could not and would not be made without first meeting with the Executive Committee. She deferred further discussion until the December meeting.

Commissioner Pittinger interjected a point of order, acknowledging that the project is worthy, but indicating also that there is a need for the Commission "to do some internal housekeeping" especially as far as outlining ground rules under which guests may offer comments. She suggested that no further discussion be pursued on the topic until after the necessary ground rules are identified.

The Chair stated that while the Commission is interested in producing the finished manual, it will be produced as a Commission document. Further discussion will be deferred until after the Executive Committee meets.

2. The Reverend Timothy Smith stated that he sits on the board of Hazelwood Initiative and would like to have someone from the Commission speak to this group in the near future with regard to employment and housing issues. The group meets the second Tuesday of each month from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. at the Car Barn on Second Avenue. Approximately 60 persons are usually in attendance.

Having no further business to address, Commissioner Engel moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Father Vallone and carried unanimously. The meeting concluded at 4:38 p.m.

/cmz

PITTSBURGH COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS
Notes of Meeting of Public Hearing Section
November 1, 2004

Attendance: Rev. Lou Vallone, *Chair*

Robert McClenahan

Elizabeth Pittinger

B J. Samson

Father Vallone called the meeting to order at 3:29 p.m. for the purpose of addressing the seven cases known as Henson, et al v. University of Pittsburgh. A copy of the case summary was forwarded to members of the Public Hearing Section for their review prior to today's meeting.

Father Vallone reported that due to the actions of the Complainants and Respondent to settle this dispute, the Complainants have formally requested the withdrawal of their complaints. He asked if any Commissioner had any questions. Hearing none, Commissioner McClenahan moved to accept staff finding to close the cases as "withdrawn with settlement." Commissioner Pittinger seconded the motion and the vote carried unanimously.

With no further business for the Section members to address, the meeting was properly adjourned at 3:32 p.m.

MEMORANDUM

To: All Commissioners

FROM: Connie Miskis Zatek 
Secretary to Director

DATE: October 25, 2004

SUBJECT: **MEETING NOTICE**

The Commission is scheduled to meet on **Monday, November 1, 2004** as follows:

2:30 p.m. Compliance Review Section

3:30 p.m. Full Commission meeting

The following items are enclosed for your review:

1. Minutes of the October 4th Commission Meeting
2. Director's Report for October activities
3. Case Summary Package (*for Compliance Review Section Members Only*)
Please note that a quorum was not established in October, therefore this month's cases will include cases from both October and November.

It is important that you attend your assigned meeting(s). If you are unable to attend, please call me immediately at 412-255-2600.

/cmz
Enclosures

Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations

Director's Report

October 22, 2004

Sept.27, 2004	Attended the meeting of the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission held in Pittsburgh. Spoke to the Commission about current trends, issues and concerns in the area and the working relationship between the PCHR and the state.
Sept. 29, 2004	Met with representatives from the Fair Housing Partnership of Greater Pittsburgh and the Port Authority of Allegheny County with regard to a joint advertising campaign using PAT buses.
Oct. 04, 2004	Participated in the kick-off program for the National Disabilities Awareness month.
Oct. 05, 2004	Met with representatives of UPN-TV to discuss a series of PSA's on the Fair Housing Act.
Oct. 05, 2004	Met with representatives from the City's Bureau of Cable Communications to discuss the upgrade/revision of the Commission's Fair Housing video.
Oct. 12, 2004	Met with representatives from the Pittsburgh Inter-faith Impact Network (PIIN) to discuss their concerns with regard to fair housing.
Oct. 13, 2004	Attended the meeting of the Pittsburgh Board of Public Education's Inter-Agency Task Force. Items discussed included "Project Safe Neighborhoods," truancy, and the role of media and its influence in school/community affairs.
Oct. 17, 2004	Attended the public meeting of PIIN at Wesley A.M.E. Zion Church.
Oct. 20, 2004	Met with City Council with regard to legislation authorizing the Commission to contract with the FHP to do joint education and outreach under our HUD partnership grant.

Same-sex benefits lawsuit against Pitt officially over

10-5-02
By Bill Schackner
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Seven workers today will officially drop their 8-year-old discrimination lawsuit against the University of Pittsburgh over same-sex benefits now that the school intends to offer the coverage, individuals involved in the case said.

The development means an end to the highly charged court fight that spawned a challenge to Pittsburgh's gay rights law as well as campus protests and a hunger strike.

On Sept. 1, in what was viewed as a major breakthrough, Pitt Chancellor Mark Nordenberg announced that the university will extend health coverage to same- and opposite-sex partners of its employees starting in January. He said the move was not linked to the lawsuit, but rather to growing pressure to compete with other campuses already offering the benefit.

At a news conference the next day, lawyers for the ACLU said gay and lesbian workers suing the school were considering whether to pursue

compensation for years the benefit was denied. The ACLU was due in court tomorrow to appeal a permanent injunction issued by a Common Pleas Court judge prohibiting the Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations from hearing the case.

But the American Civil Liberties Union has notified lawyers for Pitt that it does not intend to pursue the appeal, effectively dropping the case. A public announcement is planned for today.

"We spoke to our clients, and the decision, after reflection, was unanimous to forgo any effort to seek damages and to move forward with the university in a spirit of cooperation," said Chris Biancheria, one of the ACLU lawyers in the case.

Pitt spokesman Robert Hill said: "Obviously we're pleased with the decision. ... We never believed that the courts were the proper forum to resolve the issue, and we are very pleased that it is now resolved."

Ray Anne Lockard, one of the plaintiffs, took a second job to help pay some \$400 in monthly prescription bills for her ailing partner. Lockard said she's OK with the decision.

"I would love to have more money for my family. Who wouldn't? But on the other hand, they've done the fair thing and provided these benefits," said Lockard, head librarian at the Frick Fine Arts Library.

The 1996 suit, now a class-action case, was originally filed before the Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations, which found probable cause that Pitt discriminated. But in January, Allegheny County Common Pleas Judge Robert Gallo permanently enjoined the commission from hearing the case, saying he found no evidence that Pitt intentionally discriminated.

Bill Schackner can be reached at
bschackner@post-gazette.com or 412-263-1977.