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PITTSBURGH COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS
Minutes of Meeting
May 4, 2009

Attendance: Adelaide Smith, Chair

Winford Craig	Beth Pittinger
Lynette Drawn-Williamson	Amanda Rubio
Lee Fogarty	Curtis Smith
Anne McCafferty	Rev. Timothy L. Smith, Sr.
Mary K. McDonald	Leah Williams-Duncan

Called/Unable to Attend:

Eleanor P. Loftus
Neil Parham

Staff: Charles Morrison, Director
Janice Casey

W. Kevin Trower, Solicitor

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Adelaide Smith called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

II. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

A correction was made regarding Commissioner Drawn-Williamson not listed under "Called/Unable to Attend" as an excused absence. With that correction, the minutes were unanimously adopted upon motion of Commissioner Leah Williams-Duncan and second by Commissioner Winford Craig.

III. STAFF AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Compliance Update

Director Morrison informed the Commissioners that at this time there is no signed contract with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). The agency has been doing business as usual and has closed 57 cases to date. The director anticipates that the contract amount will be between 75-77 cases which will leave us approximately 20 cases away from meeting the contract. There are three remaining Commission meetings in which 20 cases can be closed in time to fulfill the contract. Some communication regarding the contract is expected in the near future.

B. Director's Report

A full written report was mailed to Commissioners prior to today's meeting.

The Director, staff and Commissioner McDonald attended a HUD-sponsored Fair Housing Act Accessibility Requirements training. The training focused on accessibility requirements in multi-family housing subject to the provisions of the Fair Housing Act which was amended in 1988 and became effective in 1991. There are monies available to the public through Urban Redevelopment Authority and Action Housing to help bring them up to standard.

C. Housing Committee Report

Commissioner Craig reported on plans with regard to the housing committee:

- additional members assigned
- focus on next years' Fair Housing Month
- Commission to receive money
- Monies for education in school system
- When having meeting or programs to have give-aways that people can take and will serve as a long-term reminder/enhance awareness of fair housing during the year

Director Morrison reported that the Commission had four events during April (Fair Housing Month) Informational Photo Exhibit in the City-County Building lobby, an information fair with Urban League, URA, Action Housing and Allegheny County; Commission/Community meeting at the Hill House, and an educational program for Coldwell Banker Real Estate.

Commissioner Craig stated that the goal is to make the public aware of what housing discrimination is and identify the agencies that handle this. During Fair Housing Month; there have been ads displayed on buses, billboards, taxis, etc.

Commissioner Adelaide Smith asked about the use of a program Frances Barnes developed for the school system that would help inform young adults about housing. This program is entitled Moving Out/Moving On which targets seniors in high school.

Commissioner Winford Craig said he could speak with Sam Franklin of the Pittsburgh Schools about their use of this material.

Commissioner Craig also spoke about money available under the City's Fair Housing Plan. In response to a question, the director stated that the money for Fair Housing is not restricted to CDBG eligible areas only.

Commissioner Pittinger stated that most of the city residents are CDBG eligible and based on income questioned the distribution of resources stating that some neighborhoods do not get equitable distribution.

Many people point to other neighborhoods complaining that one gets more services or resources than another. The Director stated that several years ago we looked to see if there was a breakdown by council district, neighborhood, etc and found that there was not. The most expensive services are for police, fire and EMS.

The Commission discussed the subject of where the resources are coming from and where is this money being spent. Commissioner McCafferty suggested that this may be an ideal project for the Carnegie Mellon University Heinz School of Public Policy.

The Commissioners also questioned revenues generated by state, local & federal taxes and their distribution. Commissioner Rev. Smith stated that there are many forms of economic discrimination and this information would be helpful in connecting the dots.

A motion was made by Commissioner Pittinger that the Commission pursue the collection of information of the socio-economic information for the city, seconded by Commissioner McCafferty.

D. Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee recommended the following persons for positions on the Executive Committee:

Chair	Adelaide Smith
1st Vice Chair	Leah Williams-Duncan
2 nd Vice Chair	Curtis Smith
Secretary	Lynette Drawn-Williamson
Treasurer	Winford Craig

IV. NEW BUSINESS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Pittinger brought up the incident of the shooting of the three police officers in Stanton Heights and the shooters' involvement in hate groups. This started a discussion about hate groups, the violence in our communities and disrespect in the school system.

Commissioner Pittinger stated that Richard Poplawski, the alleged shooter, was a reader of the "Turner Diaries" and stated that former Commissioner Chuck Honze gave the Commission the "Turner Diaries" and maybe this book can be obtained again. She felt the Commission should be well-informed and have information on hate groups which are active in the area. If hate activities are closely monitored it will serve to avoid similar incidents in the future. Commissioner Curtis Smith stated that the Bnai' Brith' is a top notch organization in the monitoring of hate activity. The Southern Poverty Law Center was also named as a resource of hate groups. There are procedures that dictate that when a hate-crime or incident is committed in the city; the director is to be notified. This procedure has not been followed in recent years. Other concerns include violence and disrespect in the schools and hate slurs against Mexicans and Latinos.

Commissioner Pittinger referred to the Nation of Islam as a hate group which is one of many which are operating in plain sight. This agency should who the groups in the city are and what they are doing to let them know that we know they are there and that we are watching them. The Commission should be aware, informed and burden about this.

The Commissioners indicated an interest in having more information in this regard. A possible source of information for statistics is the State which will provide us with numbers but what is needed is some kind of structured plan.

Commissioner Rev. Smith stated a continuing concern about the many expulsions and suspensions that are given to youth at various high schools and wanted to know if there is some kind of right-to-know information so that he may get statistics on the racial composition of the disciplines.

The Chair asked that the Commissioners think about an effective way to use this information and that the discussion will be reopened at the next meeting. In the meantime, if anyone could gather information they can email it to the Director.

Commissioner Williams-Duncan suggested that the Commission send condolences to the officers' families.

Commissioner Drawn-Williamson said on April 9 she represented the Commission at a providers meeting held at the Homewood YMCA distributed flyers to help with community outreach. She encouraged the Commissioners when they are at different events to do outreach for the Commission.

Two Commission meetings this year are to be held in the community. The first one was held at the Hill House in April and the next one is July which is possibly scheduled for the Northside. Due to the holiday, Commissioners suggested moving the meeting to Monday, July 13, 2009. Suggested places for the meeting were the Northside Senior Center and Manchester Craftsman's Guild.

The turnout for the April meeting held at the Hill House was a disappointment. There was also discussion about certain topics which would encourage people to attend.

Rev. Jack O'Malley's name was mentioned as someone who should be considered for an appointment to the Commission.

Discussion turned to possibly having the Commission's meeting in Beechview to hear from the Latino community with regard to the issues and concerns they face. The name of Sister Janice came up as someone who is working with this group and who would know if the community is interested.

Commissioners suggested that we have our meeting the same day as a community organization only an hour earlier to get more people familiar with the work of the Commission. It was suggested Public hearings be held on topics that would draw community interest and that we target the stronger churches and ask for their assistance in getting the word out.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner McDonald moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:15 p.m.; and Commissioner Rubio seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

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Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations
Director's Report
April 24, 2009

- April 01, 2009 The Commission's Fair Housing Month photo exhibit and informational display in the lobby of the City-County Building began is date. The exhibit featured images from the Charles "Teenie" Harris collection from the Carnegie Museum of Art depicting life in Pittsburgh's neighborhoods prior to the passage of the Fair Housing Act. The exhibit also contained images of the work of the Urban Redevelopment Authority in improving Pittsburgh's neighborhoods.
- April 03, 2009 The Commission, along with ACTION Housing, the Allegheny County Department of Economic Development, the Urban League of Pittsburgh and the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh held a Housing Informational Fair in the lobby of the City County Building.
- April 15, 2009 Director Morrison and Commission Chair Adelaide Smith attended the Fair Housing Partnership of Greater Pittsburgh's 3rd Annual Fair Housing Poetry Slam contest at the Improv in the Waterfront complex. The Commission was a co-sponsor of this event.
- April 16, 2009 Director Morrison provided a Fair Housing Month program on current trends in fair housing to agents and managers of Coldwell Banker Real Estate. There were approximately 18-20 agents/managers involved.
- April 20, 2009 Director Morrison attended the meeting of the City of Pittsburgh/Allegheny-County Task Force on Disability meeting. Items discussed included accessibility issues with regard to the additions to the National Aviary at Pittsburgh, the City's plan to obtain a vehicle for the transport of wheelchair users and/or the wheelchair itself and the obligations of housing providers to provide interpretive services under Section 504.
- April 23, 2009 Director Morrison, Commission Representatives Clark and McKinley and Commissioner Mary K. McDonald attended the HUD-sponsored Fair Housing Accessibility First training and technical guidance program.