

COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

May 9, 2006

The meeting of the Maryland Commission on Human Relations was called to order on Tuesday, May 9, 2006 at 10:20 a.m., in Baltimore, Maryland.

Present Thomas Owen, Sambhu Banik and JoAnn Fisher.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES The minutes of the April Commission meeting were accepted as written.

Recognition of Jonathan Riddix Service to the Agency Chairperson Owen recognized and congratulated Jonathan Riddix for thirty-four years of service with the Commission. Mr. Riddix received a citation from the Governor's office for his service to the Commission. The Executive Director commended Mr. Riddix for many, many years of service. The Commission and the agency appreciate the years of service given by Mr. Riddix.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT Commissioners received copies of the Chairperson's Report (See attached). Meetings have continued with the Immigrant Study Committee.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT Commissioners received copies of the Chairperson's Report (See attached).

Fair Housing Event The Executive Director informed Commissioners that he gave opening remarks during the HUD and Commission sponsored Fair Housing Event in honor of fair housing month. The agency's Training Specialist, Keith Merkey, coordinated the event and was also the Master of Ceremonies for the event.

Harford County Human Relations Commission The Executive Director informed Commissioners that he talked to Ria Johnson, Chairperson, of Harford County Human Relations. The Harford County Commission will be having a Retreat on June 3, 2006. Mr. Ford will attend. The Harford County Commission would like to know what type of activities a volunteer Commission, which has little or no staff, can provide within the community to make their existence worthwhile. The Executive Director suggested

that the best places to look for input would be from other local Commissions that are in similar situations.

**DEPUTY DIRECTOR'S
REPORT**

Commissioners received copies of the Deputy Director's Report (See attached). The Deputy Director informed Commissioners that the HUD and EEOC contracts are on track.

**ASSISTANT
DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Commissioners received copies of the agency's Monthly Budget Status Report provided by the Assistant Director (See attached). The Assistant Director informed Commissioners that MCHR is entering into the last month of this fiscal year. MCHR does not anticipate any problems closing in the black.

The Assistant Director informed Commissioners that he had a conversation with MCHR's Budget and Management Analyst, about one week ago, during which the Analyst indicated that he was in the process of scheduling his visits to agencies. The Assistant Director reminded the Budget Analyst that MCHR would like that visit to be held on the second Tuesday of the month in order to meet with Commissioners. When MCHR receives confirmation on the date for the Analyst's visit we will notify Commissioners.

Legislative Auditor

The Assistant Director informed Commissioners that the Legislative Auditor is still here. The Auditor may be here another 3 – 4 weeks before he finishes. The analyst has indicated no problems thus far.

Information Technology

The Information Technology Manager informed Commissioners that during the last two months fewer people visited MCHR's website.

**GENERAL COUNSEL'S
REPORT**

Commissioner's received copies of the General Counsel's Report (See attached).

Women's Laws Center

The General Counsel informed Commissioners that the Women's Law Center received grant money to put together an employment law hotline. The intent of the Center is to get together a pool of volunteer attorneys to staff the hotline during certain time frames. The Center receives calls from people asking questions about employment discrimination based on gender and employment issues.

The General Counsel participated on a panel during the Montgomery County Human Relations Fair Housing forum. There was excellent dialogue with the audience on the different topics and areas in fair housing.

**OLD BUSINESS
Immigrant Study**

Chairperson Owen updated Commissioners in reference to the progress of the Immigrant Study. Dr. Schneider has obtained some funding for the first phase of the study. Discussions with the Commission for Hispanic Affairs regarding its participation in the study continued. Dr. Schneider, Dr. Hanson and representatives of

MCHR will attend the next Hispanic Affairs Commission meeting to answer further questions.

NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Fisher informed Commissioners that she would like the Commissioners' approval and assistance with awakening veterans to the benefits of the Human Relations Commission.

Commissioner Fisher is sponsoring an event for the Town of Forest Heights, Maryland. The purpose of this event is to better organize veterans. The event will be held during the Memorial Day weekend. This is a by-partisan event being organized by Commissioner Fisher. Delegate Brown has been asked to speak on Saturday, a woman veteran has also been asked to speak. On Monday the Lieutenant Governor and the Secretary of Veteran Affairs will be speaking.

The Executive Director informed Commissioner Fisher that issues dealing with veterans are not part of the Commission's mandate. Veterans are not one of the protected classes in Maryland law. The Executive Director also stated that the Commission may or may not have authority to step in to be a part of the event, depending on what the event is and what the overall objective is. It is always appropriate for staff and Commissioners to be involved with outside organizations.

Commissioners' Attendance

Chairperson Owen informed Commissioners that he will be sending out letters to Commissioners in reference to attendance. Chairperson Owen stated that it is important that all Commissioners attend monthly meetings to ensure that business is conducted in the manner in which it should be. Chairperson Owen inquired as to suggestions as to how to get better attendance during monthly Commission meetings.

During the discussions regarding attendance at monthly Commission meetings some alternatives suggested were: 1) changing the day and time of the meetings; 2) conducting telephone conference calls and use of the internet; 3) holding fewer meetings during the year.

Commissioner Banik informed Commissioners that he has been elected as Vice-President of the State Department of Foreign Services. Commissioner Banik has also been asked to serve as Counsel to the U.S. ID Commission Board this year. Commissioner Banik will not be attending the June and July Commission meetings due to the above-mentioned commitments.

Commission meeting was adjourned at 11:25 a.m.