

COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
September 9, 2008

The meeting of the Maryland Commission on Human Relations was called to order on Tuesday, September 9, 2008 at 10:05 a.m., in Baltimore, Maryland.

PRESENT Norman Gelman, John Hermina, Rabbi Elan Adler, Doris Cowl, Joyce De Laurentis, Jo Ann Fisher, Thomas Owen and Shawn Wright.

Approval of the Minutes The minutes of the July meeting were approved as written.

New Investigators The Deputy Director introduced the three new investigators to the Commissioners. The new investigators are Hartley Aligbeh, Carlos Loria and Cleveland Horton. The Deputy Director informed Commissioners that Mr. Loria is exploring opening the possibility of opening an office, free of charge, in Easton. That would raise MCHR's visibility on the Eastern shore. Chairperson Gelman welcomed the new investigators to MCHR.

Commissioner Cowl inquired as to how many investigators work for the agency. The Deputy Director replied that MCHR has seventeen investigator positions. The Deputy Director added that as of two weeks from today MCHR will have three vacancies, It is not yet clear whether the vacancies can be filled.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT
Unfunded Budget Request
Interfaith Initiative Commissioners received copies of the Chairperson's Report (See attached). Chairperson Gelman told Commissioners that he took part in the preparation of the submission of the request made to the Governor's office and the Dept. of Budget and Management. Funding was requested for the proposed intergroup dialog initiative. Chairperson Gelman said that Ms. Harris, the liaison to MCHR in the Governor's office, indicated that MCHR has the Governor's approval for this initiative, but there was no commitment to any particular level of funding.

Chairperson Gelman also reported that he consulted Senator Rich Madaleno (D.-Mont) who is the Vice-Chairman of the sub-committee of the Appropriations Committee that handles the MCHR budget. Senator Madaleno

suggested how MCHR should proceed, if the agency has a new funding proposal that we have to defend before the legislature. .

This would involve meeting with the Chairman and some of the other subcommittee members to explain what we hope to accomplish and seek to enlist their support. The legislature cannot add to the Governor's budget but they can cut it, and it is customary for the legislative analyst to give particular attention to new spending proposals. Even if the Governor's office proposes additional funding for MCHR the senate or the house can eliminate or reduce the amount. Lobbying in Annapolis will surely be needed. Chairperson Gelman will be asking Commissioners to communicate with members of the legislature, either by letter or telephone calls, to ask for support of this initiative.

Chairperson Gelman notified Commissioners that an appeal case was heard by a panel consisting of himself, Commissioners Fisher and Wright. A decision will be rendered in the near future. Chairperson Gelman informed Commissioners that the Executive Director is not present today because of an emergency at home.

**EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR'S
REPORT**

Commissioners received copies of the Executive Director's Report (See attached).

Commissioner Training The General Counsel reminded Commissioners to save the date of Wednesday, October 29, 2008 for the Commissioners' training sponsored by MHRWA, in Howard County.

Anti-Hate Summit The General Counsel informed Commissioners that COVE will be sponsoring an Anti-Hate Summit on Tuesday, October 7, 2008 in College Park. If any Commissioner is interested please complete the registration form and let the Administrative Officer know.

**DEPUTY
DIRECTOR'S
REPORT**
EEOC Contract

Commissioners received copies of the Deputy Director's Report (See attached). The Deputy Director informed Commissioners that earlier this month MCHR completed all the work on the EEOC contract, which does not end until September 30, 2008.

Public Accommodation Cases Everyone in the investigative units is currently working on public accommodations cases.

Information Technology Vacancy The Deputy Director informed Commissioners that interviews have been conducted and an offer has been extended.

Chairperson Gelman and Commissioners thanked the Information Technology Specialist for all the work that he has done.

**GENERAL
COUNSEL'S
REPORT**

Training

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

The General Counsel informed Commissioners that training was conducted in August for the Office of Administrative Hearing Judges who hear MCHR cases. The training covered Article 49B and the Commercial Non-Discrimination law.

The General Counsel informed Commissioners that the state's EEO Office sponsored a Retreat that she and the agency's Training Specialist participated in.

Legislation

Chairperson Gelman inquired as to the status of legislation and what may be down the road. The General Counsel informed Commissioners that she has not yet heard anything.

Commissioner Cowl requested a list of the legislative committee members for the house and the senate. The General Counsel informed Commissioners that she can provide a list of committee members but usually the members of the committees change between now and when the session starts.

NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Cowl thanked the Deputy Director for allowing her to observe a mediation.

Commissioner Cowl had several questions regarding the process for cases that are filed at the agency. The Deputy Director and the General Counsel each described the different stages of case processing. It was decided that the newer Commissioners would be trained on the process of MCHR's cases.

Commissioner Rabbi Adler questioned whether Commissioners should make statements to local newspapers in reference to cases before the Commission. The General Counsel informed Commissioners that they should refer these inquiries to the General Counsel.

The Commission meeting was adjourned at 11:40 a.m.

Barbara Wilson