

HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES  
April 16, 2003

MEMBERS PRESENT

Gilbert Blanks  
Teresa Delph  
Kathleen Conley  
Kelly Ellis  
Ed Peterson  
Thomas Ramundo  
Will Riley  
Robert Whitman

MEMBERS ABSENT

Alice Lewis (exc)

EX-OFFICIO

Parrish Stahl

STAFF

Henry L. Jenkins

GUESTS

Richard Lawson, Empowerment Quest of MI  
Tiffany Gerard, Fair Housing Center

1. CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Riley at 6:30 p.m. Roll call was taken. Chairman Riley welcomed Kelly Ellis to the HRC.

2. CITIZEN COMMENTS:

Richard Lawson, Empowerment Quest of Michigan, introduced himself and requested that the Public Relations Committee Chairman work with him to update him on HRC activities.

Tiffany Gerard, Jackson County Fair Housing, introduced herself and gave an update on Fair Housing activities. Also, she distributed the April 2003 newsletter and a test to the commissioners to explain what is unlawful in the area of housing. The organization is celebrating its 15th year. The annual meeting will take place April 21st at 5:30 p.m. at the Commonwealth Commerce Center.

3. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

A motion was made by Ed Peterson and supported by Robert Whitman to approve the amended minutes. The amendment included the following statement being removed from the minutes, "Thomas Ramundo questioned Kathleen Conley's recent absences without contacting HRC office." Secondly, an addition was made of ex-officio member Parrish Lee Stahl to the member present list. The motion carried.

4. POLICE LIAISON:

No report.

5. COMMUNITY UPDATE/CHAIRMAN'S CORRESPONDENCE:

Staff reported that Janice Fairley recently resigned as President of the Jackson County Branch NAACP due to personal reasons. A motion was made by Thomas Ramundo and supported by Robert Whitman to send a letter and a resolution to Ms. Fairley commending her for her service to the community. The motion carried.

Gilbert Blanks reported that Jackson Public Schools will be holding a Stakeholders meeting on Monday, April 21, 2003, at 5:30 p.m. He will try to attend. Staff stated that this is an annual meeting that gives the status of the School system.

6. STAFF REPORT:

Staff reviewed the financial reports.

Staff reported that the Michigan Department of Civil Rights celebrated their 40th anniversary. Also, Dr. Reynolds, the Director, will be retiring at the end of the year.

A motion was made by Gilbert Blanks and supported by Kathleen Conley to accept the financial report as presented. The motion carried.

7. COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Community Needs - No report.

Diversity Training - No report.

Proposed Civil Rights Ordinance - Robert Whitman

Robert Whitman reported that a meeting was held with Will Riley, Staff, himself and Rick Davies regarding trying to get more support from the business community for the Civil Rights Ordinance.

HRC Director -

Chairman Riley stated that he feels the biggest hurdle will be to get funding for this position. He is still doing some exploring.

Labor and Industry -

Chairman Riley reported that he talked to Ron Brooks about mediation training, and he is willing to work something out if there is an interest. Ed Peterson, Teresa Delph, Gilbert Blanks and Alice Lewis expressed an interest in the training.

Diversity/Minority Employment/City - Teresa Delph

Staff reported on the City's EEO Report. The City's employment numbers have not changed much.

Public Relations and Information - Ed Peterson

Ed Peterson reported that a newsletter could be put together, and he listed many topics and activities.

A brief discussion took place in regards to Oneness of Humankind. Ed reported that he spoke with Councilmember Breeding who said he will support the Oneness of Humankind resolution, and that the HRC needs to send it back to the City Council with a cover letter

explaining why the resolution is needed and why it is important. Ed Peterson and Gilbert Blanks will work on this.

Communication with City Council - Alice Lewis

No report.

Film Festival

Gilbert Blanks stated that he contacted Mary Baker at the Citizen Patriot. She suggested a film called Passion Fish. Parrish Stahl gave an overview and opinion of the movie. He felt that it is very realistic in its dealing with people with disabilities. However, because of its R rating, he thought that it might not be considered appropriate by some people. He highly recommended that each HRC member view the movie, and perhaps bring it back at a later date when it would be more accepted. He also recommended the movie, "Remember the Titans." This movie deals with a lot of the diversity issues without the language and nudity. Gilbert Blanks reported that in speaking with George Davis of the Michigan Theatre, that this movie is made by Disney, and that it can be very difficult to get a copy of the movie for a showing. Discussion followed. Parrish Stahl also suggested the movie, "Lean on Me." It was decided to work on getting, "To Kill a Mockingbird" for a summer film festival, and then to try to coordinate getting, "The Mighty" in the fall since the schools will be reading the book. Chairman Riley suggested a list of films be made.

Nominating Committee - Thomas Ramundo

No report.

Study Circles - Gilbert Blanks

Gilbert Blanks reported that the Study Circle meetings went well. He gave a brief overview of what has been accomplished. A picnic is being planned in the park for participants. His goal is to have six study circle groups with trained facilitators for each group and specify well ahead of times of meeting. The Study Circle program may meet in September, Monday evenings at 6:00 p.m. and Thursday mornings at 9:00 a.m., or Saturday at 9:00 a.m. He hopes to have childcare provided also.

Gilbert Blanks announced that there will be a study circle steering committee meeting on April 28, at 6:00 p.m. on the 14th floor of City Hall to discuss the future of study circles.

7. OLD BUSINESS:

8. NEW BUSINESS:

Tom Ramundo asked if there would be a Cinco De Mayo celebration this year in Jackson. Staff related that due to lack of financial support the group did not have a celebration last year, and that nothing had been received this year regarding one. He will contact Juan Rodriguez to ask if there will be a celebration this year.

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Robert Whitman questioned the collection of statistics by the Police Chief. Staff reported that this was an agreement for a period of one year only. Discussion followed.

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Teressa Delph". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Teressa Delph  
Secretary