

ST. MARY'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

Joseph Bush, Chair
Cynthia A. Brown, *Commission Liaison*



Francis Jack Russell, President
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Lawrence D. Jarboe, Commissioner
Thomas A. Mattingly, Sr., Commissioner
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St. Mary's County Human Relations Commission
October 8, 2008
Minutes

Attendance: Theo Cramer, Rose Everett, Joseph Bush, Joyce Dyson, Pam McKay, and Jim Hanley

Guest: Bonnie Hernandez, Maryland Commission on Human Relations; Mac McClintock, community member

Staff Liaison: Cynthia Brown, Dept of Human Services

The meeting was convened at 5:35 pm by Vice-Chair Joseph Bush. Introductions were made and the new member, Pam McKay, was welcomed.

Budget Summary: Cynthia Brown reported the budget for FY09, which began July 1, is \$2,100. There have been no expenditures to date.

Presentation by Bonnie Hernandez: Ms Hernandez is the Senior Investigator for the Southern Maryland Field Office of the Maryland Commission on Human Relations and her jurisdiction in St. Mary's, Calvert, Charles and Southern Prince George's Counties. Her office is located in Leonardtown in the Carter State Office Building on the lower level. Ms. Hernandez reported on the functions of the State Commission and how the local HRC can work along with it. She explained the State Commission is founded upon Article 49B of the Annotated Code of Maryland which prohibits discriminatory treatment of individuals based on religion, race, gender, sexual orientation, age or genetic disposition. Her office can only address cases involving businesses with 15 or more employees. Cases involving businesses with fewer than 15 employees should be filed with the EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission).

Ms. Hernandez conducts the intake process and investigations and makes recommendations on the disposition of cases. Employment cases involving terminations due to race are the most frequent complaint she encounters. Often these cases are difficult to prove because Maryland is an at-will state which means employers are not obligated to give an employee a reason for termination. Another frequent employment related complaint is differential treatment on the job, as well as nepotism and harassment. Ms. Hernandez reported she also sees a number of disability related cases as it pertains to the workplace.

Jim Hanley asked if the HRC could possibly serve as mediators for those cases involving fewer than 15 employees. The St. Mary's HRC was advised by Ms Hernandez that the most appropriate way it can assist the State is by acting in an information and referral role. If citizens call the local Commission with concerns it can inform the individual of the service provided by the State. The HRC can assist by educating the public of their options for addressing the discriminatory act.

Ms. Hernandez left the meeting at the conclusion of her presentation. Cynthia Brown then gave a financial report of a \$2100 balance in the budget. To make optimal use of everyone's time, Theo Cramer requested to give his presentation at the November meeting on how the HRC can get involved in the public schools.

Election of officers was held. The slate of officers was presented as Joseph Bush, Chair and Jim Hanley, Vice-Chair. Mr. Bush made the motion, Pam McKay seconded and the motion passed unanimously. The group briefly discussed the future direction of the HRC. Cynthia reported the commission has five vacancies and there are no current membership applications pending. All agreed not to recruit at the present time, but instead focus on reviewing and updating the current charter and firmly establishing the role of the HRC and strengthening PR efforts/community awareness about the purpose of the commission.

Next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, November 5, 5:30 p.m., in Room 14 of the Governmental Center.

The meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Cynthia Brown.