



# Carbondale Human Relations Commission

Minutes – February 2, 2015  
Carbondale Civic Center ~ 5:00 p.m.

**Commissioners Present:** Lauren Bonner, Peg Falcone, Jerrold Hennrich, Eric McMillan, Faith Miller, Joshua Phillips, Kareem Shariati, Dora Weaver

**Commissioners Excused:** Joseph Brown

**Commissioners Absent:**

**Study Circle Staff Present:** Sarah Heyer

**Guests Present:** Ethan Baker, Cathy Field, Peter Lemish, Ty Mayer, Elius Reed, Nicholas Smaligo

**Staff Present:** Deborah McCoy, Interim Police Chief Grubbs

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## CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Brown at 5:02 p.m. Carbondale Community High School seniors, Ty Mayer and Ethan Baker, introduced themselves, as well as SIU Carbondale Philosophy teaching assistant and graduate student, Nick Smaligo.

## MINUTES

Motion was made by Commissioner McMillan and seconded by Commissioner Shariati to approve the minutes of the January 5, 2015 meeting. Motion carried.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

January 15, 2015 Martin Luther King Community Program, Carbondale Civic Center, 3:00 p.m.

January 16, 2015 Carbondale Branch NAACP MLK Breakfast, SIU Student Center, 8:00 a.m. breakfast, address by President Dunn at 9:00 a.m.

February 7, 2015 Zumba for the Heart, Carbondale District No. 95 Building, Giant City Road, 10:00 a.m., sponsored by Gamma Kappa Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated

February 21, 2015 Community screening and discussion of “American Denial,” a PBS Independent Lens documentary focused on the power of unconscious biases and how ideals of liberty, equality, and justice still impact notions of race and class today, Carbondale Public Library, 2:30 p.m.

February 22, 2015 Jackson County Girl Scouts Annual History Day, Newman Center, 2:00-5:00 pm

February 2, 2015

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Dr. Peter Lemish, SIU Carbondale School of Journalism, spoke about the Civic Soul project, sponsored by Imagining Geographies, SIU Carbondale College of Mass Communication and Media Arts, and WSIU Public Broadcasting. He distributed two handouts that highlight the issues being addressed by Civic Soul. Dr. Lemish commented that Imagining Geographies has been focusing on areas of injustice for the past three years. WSIU will be broadcasting four one-hour pilot programs in Spring 2015: Civic Justice; Enabling Living Independently; Save the Levees, Save the Future; and What's Holding Up the Cache Flow? The intent of the Civic Soul project is to focus on policy and action options. Commissioner Phillips spoke about the discussion regarding the Carbondale police, and Murphysboro's efforts to put together a citizens group to hear and review complaints. He commented that such a group might work in Carbondale, and that efforts could be combined so there is less duplication. Dr. Lemish spoke about establishing a Carbondale Liaison/Carbondale Citizen Aide to respond to inquiries from residents and follow-up on references and referrals. Commissioner McMillan asked for clarification about a liaison to address inquiries and commented on what sounded like a huge responsibility. Dr. Lemish provided examples of concerns of persons with disabilities to include sidewalks that need to be repaired, and businesses not cleaning sidewalks after snowfall, and the new fire station and ADA compliance. He stated that President Dunn, during his address at the MLK Breakfast, asked that groups come to him with discrete projects, and he (Dr. Lemish) would encourage groups to take Dr. Dunn's request seriously.

Commissioner Falcone stated that she would be willing to commit to the planning of and participating in the broadcast. She commented that the Civic Justice and Enabling Living Independently were two areas that seem to be the purview of the Human Relations Commission, and would be willing to help with the logistical planning. Commissioner McMillan indicated that he would commit to attending one of the broadcasts. Chair Hennrich spoke about issues with the last symposium and the conditions under which the Human Relations Commission would participate. Dr. Lemish stated that he is not asking the Human Relations Commission for collaboration, but rather participation.

Commissioner Shariati commented on the process and implementation of Black History programs that have been taken out of Africana Studies and placed in Student Affairs. He reminded Commissioners that this information was presented by Commissioner Brown at a previous meeting. Commissioner Shariati stated that he is concerned with how history has been rewritten and how the country has moved forward to educate individuals on that history.

## **STUDY CIRCLES REPORT**

Coordinator Heyer reported that the League of Women Voters is soliciting input regarding questions for the candidate forum. She indicated that feedback has been received regarding the HRC being empowered with subpoena and investigatory power. Commissioner Miller commented on the community's hesitancy with appearing before the Human Relations Commission because of the lack of subpoena power, which many other HRC's seem to have. Commissioner Shariati commented on the unfavorable response from some Commissioners when subpoena power was discussed previously. Commissioner Bonner recalled that the discussion was partly put on hold as a result of the Commission's Retreat and commitment to review its mission and goals. Coordinator Heyer stated that any ideas for questions could be emailed to her.

The Neighborhood Alliance Meeting was successful with 75 individuals attending.

Carbondale District No. 95 Superintendent Mike Shimshak is willing to attend the March HRC meeting, and provide an update on their Restorative Justice Program. Coordinator Heyer circulated *The No Fault Classroom* by Sura Hart and Victoria Kindle Hodson, along with two guides for educators: *Restorative Practices: Fostering*

*Healthy Relationships and Promoting Positive Discipline in Schools, and What We Were Doing ....*

## **NON-VIOLENT CARBONDALE PROJECT**

Coordinator Heyer stated that she, Dr. Lemish and Carbondale Public Library Director Dianna Sussman met last week with approximately 20 representatives from a variety of groups to help plan “11 Days for Compassion,” which consists of events and activities scheduled to take place March 21-31. The deadline for submitting events and activities to be considered for inclusion in the “11 Days for Compassion” project is February 21.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### Law Enforcement Reports:

Interim Chief Grubbs reported that the new system is not quite ready to go live. The City’s IT Department is working extremely hard with ITI. The next generation of the 911 software has been installed in the Carbondale and SIU’s Police Departments. Commissioner Hennrich commented that the Human Relations Commission would be forwarding its standard request for information to the Department. Interim Chief Grubbs commented that the Department and the City are working on strengthening some Ordinances related to noise and services that will help with community concerns and issues. He commended Commissioner Falcone for her efforts with the working group.

Mr. Reed commented that he saw on Channel 3 News last week where the Mt. Vernon Chapter of the NAACP, at its MLK Program, requested that more minority police officers be hired. He indicated that he could not recall such a request being made in Carbondale.

### HRC Responsibilities, Role, Charges

Agenda Restructuring: Commissioner Falcone stated that no one commented on the draft. Commissioner Shariati stated that he liked that the proposed agenda places Public Comments later on the agenda which allows business to be discussed. Commissioner Miller moved and Commissioner McMillan seconded that the proposed agenda be adopted for the next meeting. Motion carried.

Vacancies: Chair Hennrich commented that the business representative and student representative positions remain vacant.

### Education Campaign Committee:

a) HRC Web Page: Commissioner Falcone reported that there is a flyer on the web page for Black History Month and information on events such as the Martin Luther King Breakfast. The Commission doesn’t have to be sponsoring an event/activity for it to be on the website, but activities and events that are posted should fall within the interest of the purview of the Human Relations Commission.

### Community Discussions

Public Forum on Policing in Carbondale: Commissioner Miller reported that she, Ms. Field, Coordinator Heyer, and Dr. M. Stalls met Monday, January 26, 2015, 3:30 on campus. Through discussion, the

committee identified community policing and the hiring of the police chief. The Committee felt that community

HRC Meeting Notes – Page 4

February 2, 2015

policing was the more prevailing issue. Senator Kwame Raoul has been contacted and the committee awaits a response. If he is not available, Commissioner Brown will be approached. Other individuals mentioned as potential facilitators/moderators include Rev. Sonya Ingebritsen and Ms. Carolyn Snyder. The next meeting is scheduled for February 3, 2015, at Longbranch at 3:30 p.m.

Mr. Smaligo indicated that it appears that what is being remembered about the last public forum is that people were speaking out of turn. He stated that the reason he was speaking out of turn was because the person on stage was being untruthful and grossly misrepresenting both the nature of policing and the history of democracy, in particular. Her claim was that democracy was out of obedience to law, and that flies in the face of the entire tradition of democracy. His recommendation for how a public forum would be productive is to have a real understanding of that history and how policing has been suppressing social change. There must be an honest discussion where people can actually have discussion, and there is a true, open dialogue without the police being present. He suggested that break-out groups be used to further meaningful discussion.

Racial Justice Coalition: Ms. Field reported on Reverend Kimana's visit scheduled for March 21, 2015. He is a survivor of the Rwanda genocide, and will speak on how a society comes back from such an extreme conflict.

The Coalition continues to develop discussion about race, and is participating in the Civic Soul project, the American Denial community screening at the Library, and serving as a panelist at the JALC "Beyond Ferguson" discussion.

Mr. Reed commented on an article in the newspaper where Rev. Ingebritsen was quoted about police being in the elementary schools. Ms. Field indicated that the Coalition is letting the NAACP take the lead, but the Coalition is still on record as opposing the program of police in the schools. Interim Police Chief Grubbs commented that he didn't implement the program with the intent of having any controversy, and is in discussion with the Elementary School District officials so there would be notice and opportunity for discussion. There was no intent to secretly implement the program, and that is why he went to the School Board meeting to announce and discuss the programs. He waited for proper notification to be sent home with the students before Orientation sessions were held with the principals of the elementary schools. Interim Police Chief Grubbs stated that he is most willing to have discussion. The program is being revised to have a staff member accompany the officers when they visit, when available. The other side of the program is to try to maintain a safe learning environment, and to show those who may want to do harm to schools, that police have a presence. Interim Police Chief Grubbs stated that he knows the Carbondale community, and the program had nothing to do with race.

The next Racial Justice Coalition meeting is Thursday, February 5, 2015, 7:00 p.m.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Chair Hennrich indicated that for the next meeting, he would like to discuss subpoena power, and would be sending Commissioners information that was researched by former Commissioner Blaine Tisdale. Chair Hennrich commented that communication with the Mayor and Council must improve. The Commission expects to at least be notified that correspondence has been received.

Commissioner Shariati stated that he will celebrate his first anniversary with the Commission in April and has learned through his many contacts that Commissioners need printed materials to distribute, e.g. business cards, brochures, other literature. Commissioners agreed that this will be discussed at the next meeting.

Ms. McCoy reviewed the update forwarded by the City Clerk from the Clerk's annual training: "Despite the HRC Meeting Notes – Page 5  
February 2, 2015

reference to 'information' in its title, FOIA is actually an open records act. Public officials or employees are not required to answer questions or to explain the meaning of records in response to a FOIA request. Section 3.3 of FOIA (5ILCS 140/3.3) provides that "[t]his Act is not intended to compel public bodies to interpret or advise requesters as to the meaning or significance of the public records."

**NEXT MEETING:** March 2, 2015, 5:00 p.m.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion was made by Commissioner McMillan to adjourn. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Recorded by Deborah McCoy \_\_\_\_\_