



Commissioners Present: Lauren Bonner, Joseph Brown, Jerrold Hennrich, Faith Miller, Karriem Shariati, Dora Weaver

Commissioners Excused: Peg Falcone, Les O'Dell

Commissioners Absent:

Study Circle Staff Present: Sarah Heyer

Guests Present: Jackson County State's Attorney Mike Carr, Shelley Faulkner, Kim France, Eric McMillan, Margaret Nesbitt

Staff Present: Deborah McCoy

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Hennrich at 6:32 p.m.

The Chair recognized newly appointed Commissioner Karriem Shariati and Jackson County State's Attorney Mike Carr.

Minutes

Motion was made by Commissioner Brown and seconded by Commissioner Weaver to approve the minutes from the April 7, 2014, meeting. Motion carried.

Announcements

May 24: Coming out parade for US Congressman Enyart at 11:00 am in Murphysboro. Representative Mike Bost will be participating and labor unions have been invited. Rep. Mike Bost will be participating. Parade at 11:00 am.

Public Comments:

Mr. Reed presented an update on the Pravin Varughese investigation he reported on at the April HRC meeting. He noted the memorial service held at the Town Square Pavilion where Acting Mayor Don Monty accepted a petition containing about 40,000 signatures seeking further investigation. Mr. Reed stated that it was reported in the media that the petition would be sent to Governor Quinn's office. Larry Young (father of Molly Young) spoke at the memorial service. Commissioners and guests asked Jackson County State's Attorney Mike Carr about the investigation. Chair Hennrich asked Mr. Reed to summarize statements for future meetings in the interest of time. Mr. McMillan asked Mr. Reed what was expected from his reports. Mr. Reed commented that he was providing an update because the information reported was not available at the last meeting. Questions were asked about the body's metabolizing of alcohol. Mr. Carr provided a general explanation of the process and presented examples of factors that might impact the process. He stated that sometimes, someone shows up

with a report that is not accurate. He commented that he did not know whether the Carbondale Police Department (CPD) could add anything to the individual cases because, in general, police should not be discussing individual cases as comments could affect the case. Mr. Carr commented that there is a profound disconnect if it is felt that the most important thing on the HRC agenda is trying to solve a case with facts that are not known to be true. A student just lost his life and that is an extreme devastating experience for the community and university. The focus should be on whether there is something the community could have or can be done. He stated that as State's Attorney, the question is how many of these do we have, how many unresolved cases are there, and how many missing persons? Law enforcement and the community must come together. The disconnect is that law enforcement agencies need to play well with other law enforcement agencies, law enforcement needs to play well with the community, and the community needs to come together and the information be shared. Mr. Carr stated that the CPD did not know about Varuguese until a full day after his death. Mr. McMillan commented that he thought one of the most important things said by Mr. Carr was that law enforcement agencies need to play nice with the community and the community must play nice too. The community must be willing to share information with law enforcement and law enforcement must be engaged enough with the community that there is trust. There is a real strong feeling that if one cooperates with the States Attorney's Office that one is a being a "snitch" or disrespecting oneself. It is a disconnect and distrust of the Police Department. The leadership of the CPD needs to be evaluated by the City Council. The City Council can hold the leadership accountable for how well they are dealing with the community and how well they are dealing with other law enforcement agencies. He stated that he is appreciative of the efforts he has personally experienced with the Police Department. The community has trust issues with the CPD leadership. The City Council is relying on the Police Chief to give advice about things that are going on. The Council needs to have a relationship with the Chief and part of that is the evaluation process. He stated that he has not been contacted about an evaluation. Law enforcement cannot be successful if they cannot develop relationships with people who trust them enough to become witnesses.

Ms. Faulkner asked questions regarding cooperation and the refusal to cooperate. Mr. Carr stated that he does not want to make everyone in Carbondale felons, but he wants to focus on people involved in violent and serious crimes and to get anybody else that was involved. He stated that while he cannot control the sentences judges impose, he does have some say as to whether there is a mandatory sentence involved. It is a requirement that anyone wanting to get a recommendation for a reduced sentence, come in and give a statement so an assessment can be made as to whether they are being truthful and whether it is of any use.

Study Circles Report

Neighborhood Action Group

Coordinator Heyer reported the Neighborhood Action Group was present at the April 16, 2014, sharing stories event at the Eurma Hayes Center. The Neighborhood Action Group's next meeting is Wednesday, May 7, 2014, 5:00 p.m. at the Civic Center. The topics include neighborhood update, neighborhood district updates, and alliance meeting.

Non-Violent Carbondale Project

No report.

Old Business

Law Enforcement Reports: Ms. France stated that she was attending on behalf of the Racial Justice Coalition to request that a representative of the HRC attend their next meeting to provide an overview or summary of the law enforcement reports presented by the CPD. The meeting will be held on Thursday, June 5, 2014, 7:00 p.m. at the Church of the Good Shepherd. Chair Hennrich will attend.

Chair Hennrich stated that he had spoken to Acting Mayor Monty, who is requesting information as to whether or not the victims, in the particular instances indicated in the law enforcement report, were identified as African Americans by the assailants. That data indicates a high number of African American arrests, and a comparison of the data could provide information as to whether or not racial profiling is occurring.

HRC Responsibilities, Role, Charges:

Educational Campaign: Vice Chair Hennrich called attention to the white paper titled, “Restorative Justice: A Primer and Exploration of Practice Across Two North American Cities,” distributed at the last meeting. Jackson County has a pilot program on restorative justice. Mr. Carr indicated that the program is almost non-existent. A \$250,000 grant was given to the First Judicial Circuit, which includes counties in southern Illinois. Most of the grant was used for administrative costs, with the remainder left for counseling. The resources available will serve only about six juveniles in each of the counties. The offenses for which the program could apply would be for crimes where the judge would not be sending kids to jail. The program cannot be successful without some kind of statewide support and funding where there are monies available for services. The program is clearly progressive and would be good if something like that could be put into place. Chair Hennrich inquired about traffic violations going to court. In 2011, CPD issued 5,399 citations, and 2013 issued 10,471. Mr. Carr commented that part of the increase in stops can be attributed to changes in the law about the use of cell phones when driving. According to the insurance industry, the same level of distraction is present when an individual is talking with the phone to his/her ear as there is when an earpiece is used. He has tried to give people an opportunity to purchase the proper device and have the charge dropped if they could provide documentation of the purchase. Domestic violence was also a topic discussed where restorative justice may work in some instances. Also mentioned were the regular occurrences of reports for resisting arrests.

Ms. Nesbitt spoke on Carbondale Elementary District #95’s growth plan that is similar to a wrap around program to address issues of the students and their families. The District is requesting letters of support for the program. Their next meeting is May 22, 2014. Ms. Nesbitt commented that some of the teachers are against the program, and every child has the right to learn. The program growth plan is a good step and includes alternative ways to address the code of conduct. Ms. Nesbitt said about the Police Department that it is unbalanced and there needs to be training and equal employment of African Americans. The problem is with administrators and not the community. It is racism and that must be admitted. Resisting arrest is the easiest charge to get someone in the system. The problem can be resolved, but it must be admitted that it is racism. Questions were asked about the hiring process and residency boundary requirement for police officers.

Retreat: To be discussed at the June meeting.

Community Discussions:

Environmental Racism. Chair Hennrich stated that he and a few Commissioners attended the meeting held at the Eurma Hayes Center. He commented that the extent of the clean up addressed by the EPA

representative sounded good, and the current plan is not inherently environmentally racist. Mr. Reed said that consideration should be given to locating the solar panels on the other side of town and see what the response will be. Ms. Nesbitt commented that no one is against the solar panels, but the land is still contaminated and that research shows that brown fields in the United States are located in poor and African American communities. There is no consideration for the health and safety of residents. Commissioner Weaver inquired as to whether there has been any mention of compensation to the people of the northeast community. Mr. McMillan stated that there was an initial report that said the project would not proceed unless legislation was passed requiring Ameren to pay 20% for the power generator for 20 years. That legislation also applies to the project in East St. Louis, but the status of the legislation is unknown. Commissioner Miller stated that there were questions asked of the Brightfields and EPA representatives that were not answered. The two meetings that are to be scheduled by the City Council have not yet been held and the HRC should be present when they are. Ms. Nesbitt commented that when someone is concerned about an issue, he or she should do their own research. Ms. French commented that there are two issues – Brightfields and the solar panels, and the contamination which is an administrative agency issue. The Brightfields plan will probably move forward. The EPA reports indicate the site has been remediated to a point where it is contained. The EPA issues should be addressed separately and go to the agency the EPA reports to on a higher level. She stated that another of her concerns is the statute of limitations, and the discussion must start with the data.

Partnering for Social Justice: Ms. France reported that a meeting was held on May 1, 2014, and District #95 Superintendent Shimshak was present and spoke about the community growth plan that will be voted on at the May 22 meeting. Several district faculty and staff were present. While the district was commended for reaching out to the community and trying to get feedback and participation, the biggest issues discussed were that 1) the plan was not transparent -- not posted on the website or accessible for review; and 2) in the outline, everything that mentions the student is subjective in that students are not given due process where their voices and concerns can be heard - be careful when the code of conduct is replaced and there is still a focus on the consequences rather than the cause of the behavior. The suggestion is to involve the family in assessing the child and on what precedes the behavior. The way to customize the needs of the child is to know the child's environment and circumstances. What is being asked is to involve the family in assessing the circumstances and environment, rather than judging the parents, so that plans can be made on how to address the needs in the school setting. She commented that in this society, people are conditioned to react rather than to get ahead of something and be able to respond and focus on prevention. Regarding the justice system, there are two sides – one that is focusing on fixing the system that exists and making it more transparent and accountable, and one that is preventive to stop things before they are reached. She indicated that if people can be reached before they get to the justice system, there are more options. She believes that the bulk of the problems start at the police department. Police officers ought to be trained to de-escalate situations rather than escalate them. The numbers of cases that are thrown out are an indication of the lack of training. Something has to be done to intervene at that level. Ms. France indicated that she personally has contacted the police department and other agencies. For example, she submitted a proposal to the NAACP to invite the CPD and SIUC to the table following the Treyvon Martin incident, and there was no response. She stated that she is disappointed that the CPD and the SIU administrations seem to not share the same level of concern. Instead, there is too much lip service and not enough action and support behind the issues that have been raised. The concerns that have been raised have been met with silence and dismissal. Mr. Carr stated that agencies cannot respond about individual cases, but it would be nice to have a police department that the community trusts when they do say something. Ms. French stated that while she understands, there are some that believe it is better to be judged by 12 than by six, the victim advocate program, the justice system, and others. Mr. McMillan commented that law enforcement and all city administrators need to be held accountable by the people.

Illinois Municipal Human Relations Conference: Reports will be made at the next meeting.

New Business

Ms. Faulkner commented that she attended the Social Justice meeting where she expressed that care should be taken so that one form of imprisonment is not be traded for another.

Next Meeting: June 2, 2014, 6:30 p.m.

Adjournment - There being no further business, motion was made by Commissioner Brown and seconded by Commissioner Miller to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Recorded by Deborah McCoy _____