

WASHINGTON STATE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

JANUARY 26, 2012
711 S. CAPITOL WAY, SUITE 402
OLYMPIA, WA 98504

MINUTES

ATTNEDANCE

Commissioners: Yvonne Lopez-Morton, Chair; Shawn Murinko, Commissioner; Deborah Lee, Commissioner; Charlene Strong, Commissioner.

Staff: Sharon Ortiz, Executive Director; Cheryl Strobert, Assistant Director; Laura Skinner, Executive Assistant; Heather Polz, Attorney General Office.

OPENING AND WELCOME

Yvonne Lopez-Morton, Chair called the meeting to order at 9:35am.

PROPOSED RESOLUTION – CIVIL MARRIAGE AND DOMESTIC PARTNERSHIPS

Chair Lopez-Morton, Commissioner Strong, Commissioner Lee, Commissioner Murinko, Director Ortiz, Assistant Director Strobert discussed THAT SB6239 is scheduled for Executive action in the Senate Committee on Government Operations and Tribal Relations & Elections at 10 AM today, and that since the Governor initiated the legislation that perhaps the Commission could show support of the legislation by issuing a resolution. A draft resolution was reviewed by the Commissioners; Director Ortiz stated the language as written in the resolution has been approved by the Governor's office.

The language of the resolution was discussed by the Commissioners and AG Polz discussed the language of the resolution; Commissioner Murinko supports the resolution but would like to correct language and then work to get it out; Commissioner Strong supports the resolution however, would like to work on language and make immediate statement regarding the resolution; Director Ortiz stated will leave the change in language up to the Commissioners however, if the language changes it will need to be approved by the Governor's office; Chair Lopez-Morton wants to hear recommendations regarding the resolution then have a consensus.

AG Polz advised the Commissioners, Director Ortiz and Assistant Director Strobert the Commission can send the resolution out to the legislature and legislative staff only; AG Polz advised the Commission sending the resolution out to other state agencies and the public or posting on website would be considered lobbying.

Director Ortiz directed by Commissioners to make resolution public; Chair Lopez-Morton stated she would take full responsibility if any violations should arise; Commissioner Strong also supports making resolution public.

Meeting adjourned at 10:10 am, Break

Meeting resumed at 10:35 am

Chair and Commissioners resumed discussion about resolution; Chair Lopez-Morton feels strongly about the resolution and wants resolution to go public; AG Polz discussed risks involved; Chair Lopez-Morton stated resolution will become public record once signed by her and the Commissioners, even if not made public.

Chair Lopez-Morton asked if there was a motion regarding the resolution; Commissioner Murinko made motion and Commissioner Strong seconded; motion carried; Chair and Commissioners will sign resolution today; Resolution signed with minor changes to the language.

AG Polz brought attention to the lobbying law, recommends to keep track of all telephone conversations and persons with whom HRC speaks.

MINUTES

Approval of October 27, 2011 Minutes; Commissioner Murinko mad motion; Commissioner Lee seconded; motion carried.

Approval of November 30, 2011 Minutes; Commissioner Strong mad motion; Commissioner Lee seconded; motion carried.

Approval of December 16, 2011 Minutes; Commissioner Murinko made motion; Commissioner Strong seconded; motion carried.

CASE CLOSURES

Commissioner Lee made motion; Commissioner Strong seconded; motion carried.

COMMISSIONER REPORTING

Commissioner Murinko: Had plans to attend the Tacoma Martin Luther King Jr. event but was unable to due to the weather conditions; Monday, January 23, 2012 attended hearings with Director Ortiz and Assistant Director Strobert regarding House Bill 2516 and Senate Bill 6239, testified in support of bill.

Commissioner Lee: Nothing to report.

Commissioner Strong: Spoke at Everett High School about civil rights issues; on January 3, 2012, at Governor's office for the signing of marriage quality bill.

Commission Chair Lopez-Morton: Retired on January 23, 2012; visited with Spokane HRC staff; attended the Martin Luther King march with staff; attended leadership Spokane, legislative information; attended the Hispanic business lunch; attended Jan Pollock's memorial service who was an advocate for women and gender issues; met with Gloria Ochoa who came from Mexico, she is an attorney in Spokane; new mayor/ city council, will set up meetings.

Assistant Director Strobert stated prior week was an adventure due to the weather; mentioned that we are in transition period with the re-org and the new style of writing findings; Specialists now supervising investigative staff.

DIRECTORS REPORT

Director Ortiz mentions that she is saddened by Jan Pollock's passing; stated she was a leader for women.

Director Ortiz informed Commissioners, Laura Lindstrand, Policy Analyst, is covering the bills and providing updates.

On January 17, 2012 Director Ortiz presented to the House of Appropriations; hot points were settlements and how these saved Washington State millions; provided information on history of budget cuts, HRC second most cut; received good feedback from directors after presentation; Representatives did not realize that the HRC cut so badly.

Director Ortiz moved to item 7 on agenda, Budget Presentation; packets given to Chair and Commissioners regarding budget; states technical assist line helps business'; Laura Lindstrand is acting liaison to expanding technical assist program; discussed the rarity of Reasonable Cause Findings, most cases are settling; spoke about contracts, EEOC is paying \$100 more per case; HUD pays on how quickly the cases are closed; discussed case closures and staffing levels.

Commissioner Strong commented on progress that Director Ortiz and staff had made since 2009.

AG Polz stated that she, Debbie Thompson, Laura Lindstrand and Director Ortiz are learning more about Public Records since Tanya Calahan left the agency.

Director Ortiz, Commissioner Murinko and Assistant Director Strobert went to session on January 23, 2012 and attended hearing on for House Bill 2516 and Senate Bill 6239; Commissioner Murinko testified in support of the bill; On January 24, 2012, attended hearing for House Bill 1928 – Bullying Bill which could add bullying to our employment statute; the AG's office testified against the bill, stated bill was subjective and costly;

Director Ortiz commented no other state has adopted a Bullying Bill, Washington would be the first state.

Commissioner Strong requested to be notified of hearings; Laura Lindstrand to provide legislative updates.

Commissioner Murinko discussed bill to abolish the death penalty, outside HRC jurisdiction, law enforcement issue; talked about protected classes, race and mental disabilities, a possible piece within HRC jurisdiction; Chair Lopez-Morton commented ACLU role.

Chair Lopez-Morton and Commissioner Strong agree jurisdiction issue for HRC; Director Ortiz stated no resources; Commissioner Murinko commented that he just wanted to bring attention to the disproportionate number of people on death row.

Commissioner Strong stated possible civil rights violation; AG Polz advised HRC to draft statement on civil rights regarding death row; Commissioner Strong commented to make it very clear has nothing to do with agreeing or disagreeing only to do with civil rights; Commissioner Murinko to write draft and give to Laura Lindstrand.

AG Polz departs meeting early, will be available via telephone if needed.

Meeting adjourned at 11:44am, Lunch Break

Meeting resumed at 12:55pm

RULE MAKING

Laura Lindstrand, Commissioner Strong, Commissioner Murinko, Director Ortiz and guests, Karen William and Shellie Cohen attended the special meeting held on December 19, 2012 regarding rule making for sexual orientation and gender identity; put together initial list of stakeholders; looked at other states for comparative purposes; discussed future meetings with stakeholders and public meetings; work group will review comments for skeleton draft to write rules; Commissioner Strong to give presentation to HRC at the March Commission meeting.

RULE MAKING ON VETERAN STATUS

Deferred to February Commission meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

ED evaluation; Chair Lopez-Morton and Commissioner Lee to meet and go over Director Ortiz's self evaluation; Chair and all Commissioners will then meet in regards to the evaluation of Director Ortiz.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

COMMISSION MEETINGS/ STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR CALENDAR YEAR

Chair Lopez-Morton will phone in for February Commission meeting, will be in Mexico; discussed possibility of Forum and Commission meeting being held in Eastern Washington for the May Commission meeting.

Deferred further discussion to February Commission meeting.

FURTHER DISCUSSION ON RESOLUTION

AG Polz called into meeting at 1:31pm to discuss additional information regarding lobbying and violations; Commissioner Strong suggests writing letter to AG office regarding contradictory actions; Commissioner Lee seconds the idea to write letter.

Commissioner Strong made motion to discontinue presence of AG Polz at every meeting due to budgetary reasons; Commissioner Lee seconds; if legal questions come up then contact AG's office for advice; check in quarterly.

Chair Lopez-Morton, Commissioner Strong, Commissioner Lee, Commissioner Murinko unanimously support the resolution.

Director Ortiz stated Governor's office requested a follow up on advice and suggestions from AG's office regarding Resolution.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:45pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Skinner
Commission Clerk