

City of Tampa
Human Rights Board
Meeting Minutes
April 10, 2013

The City of Tampa Human Rights Board held their annual meeting on Wednesday, April 10, 2013 at 8:30 a.m., in the 2nd floor conference room of the Department of Neighborhood Services, Division of Community Affairs, 2105 N. Nebraska Avenue, Tampa, Florida.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Anthony Carswell
Phil Dinkins
Amy Mandel
John Perry

Anna Ramos
Reginald Tim
Jeffrie Van Loveren
Elias Vazquez

CITY OF TAMPA REPRESENTATIVES IN ATTENDANCE:

Maritza Betancourt
Rebecca Cortes
Margarita Gonzalez
Deborah Marshall

Allison Singer
Karen Sinnreich

GUEST:

Bill McQueen, President, Mercury Productions

Call to Order and Roll Call

Chairman Phil Dinkins called the meeting to order and asked Community Affairs staff member Rebecca Cortes to call the roll.

Approval of Minutes – February 13, 2013

Chairman Dinkins asked members to review the minutes for February 13, 2013 for corrections (the minutes had been mailed to members and copies were also available at this meeting). Motion was made by Elias Vazquez and seconded by Reginald Tim, to accept the minutes as submitted. The **motion** was accepted unanimously by all members present.

Chairman Phil Dinkins asked Maritza to introduce the fair housing consultant, Bill McQueen, President, Mercury Productions. Ms. Betancourt said that Mr. McQueen's presentation would cover public information and promoting of Community Affairs.

Mr. McQueen passed out business cards, and began his presentation by saying that he had come aboard as a vendor with the City of Tampa last year, to provide communications, marketing, pr and advertising services. He said that there is a need to attract people. Basically, he is here to let people who feel they have been discriminated against in three areas: housing, employment and public accommodations, and what their rights are, and what recourse they have. They came up with a six point communication plan, with the first point being a communication plan, which spells out what they propose and how they propose to do it.

The largest part of the plan is an approximate 3-minute video with enacted scenes, and is to be used for public awareness of Community Affairs to let people know who Community Affairs is, and what Community Affairs does. It will be available in English & Spanish, incorporated into the City of Tampa website, made available in You Tube, and as a stand-alone DVD as a way to get the message out to the public. The second point is a power point presentation, and an example would be a community group such as a church, where a staff member or outsider could do the presentation. The content would be the same as far as the content to define discrimination, the classes, and get people to call. They ran into a problem with Facebook, which involves continuous updates, and a decision was made to not use as a resource. The City of Tampa will allow them to put content on the City of Tampa's Facebook page, like a paragraph or two on discrimination. Thought was also given to a separate website with a distinctive url name such as tampagov.\communityaffairs. Updates are being made to look of the web page, but they need to stay within the City of Tampa Public Affairs' parameters, and be user friendly. Three forms have been developed, color was added to the logo, and they are in pdf form for fill-in and printing. The forms cannot be submitted electronically, due to confidentiality of information. However, forms can be mailed or delivered in person. They are working on a one-sheet for distribution, which will have information on what to do if discriminated against. Mr. McQueen referred to previous videos for the Tampa Bay Regional Heights Council with a different topic, but same principle, about illegal discharges, reporting of storm sewer, gas leak, garbage collectors and street crews. For the audio video, the script was submitted and asked if the information was correct, and if it was what the video should say. For the shooting scenes, they will add scenes, get the right words and will have translated into Spanish. The next step is to do broadcast Spanish, because phrases could mean different things.

Chairman Dinkins asked who would do the recording. Mr. McQueen said it would be all voice with enacted scenes of typical situations people face such as: a woman applying for a job and the person taking the application kind of looks at her and says no; a husband and wife looking at an apartment and a door shoved at them and not allowed in. The narrator would be a professional narrator. Chairman Dinkins suggested having a well-known celebrity and said that when he's at the airport and takes shuttle, you hear the Mayor's voice saying welcome to Tampa, this is Mayor Bob Buckhorn. Mr. McQueen said they gave this some thought, but also thought about having someone too authoritative or intimidating, where the person would ask if they do this, and ask themselves if they would be exposing themselves. He feels that a female's voice would be better and may take the fear out of taking action. One reason they are keeping the message as a voice server is, because they do not want the video to be about a celebrity. They want the public to focus on the situation. Anna Ramos suggested Lisette Campos and Veronica Cintron. Mr. Carswell said that it was a good point that the overall mission of marketing is that you have the Mayor of the city tell you to call, if you have an issue. Ms. Betancourt asked what could be done for persons to not call the Mayor's office. Mr. McQueen said the number for Community Affairs would be given and a member suggested that the Mayor's office be alerted, in case they receive these types of calls. In the case where the Mayor would come in, changes to the digital video could be easily made. Mr. McQueen suggested that the Mayor do a 15-second video introduction, emphasizing that the City of Tampa will not tolerate discrimination and inform the public what to do. The Mayor could begin the video in English and someone could follow in Spanish. Mr. Perry asked about the timeline for completion, and Mr. McQueen said about two months, since they are two third from completion. Mr. McQueen said he would leave funds in case something comes up. No radio will be used as media, because this was not included in the budget. The ad can be run on CT/TV. He asked Mr. Vazquez for a suggestion on the one-sheet, and Mr. Vazquez said information could be added to the Tampa Police department's home page. Mr. McQueen announced that they are looking for volunteers for the video scenes. The final product will be made available for members to view. This concluded Mr. McQueen's presentation.

Chairman Dinkins asked Mr. Perry to see Ms. Cortes after the meeting regarding contact information.

Regular Reports

Administrator's Report – Mr. Slater attended a town hall meeting in Tampa on the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's (EEOC) nationwide priorities and circulated listing which included topics on eliminating barriers in recruitment and hiring; protecting immigrant, migrant and other vulnerable workers; addressing emerging and developing issues; enforcing equal pay laws; preserving access to the legal system; and preventing harassment through systemic enforcement and targeted outreach . About 30 persons attended this event, which is considered low, and the details of advertisement and reason for low turnout was unknown, and there will be upcoming EEOC conferences.

Mr. Slater said that the Mayor presented the State of the City March 26th. There are changes coming Budget has a \$20 million dollar deficit and each department has been asked to cut 5-7% of their budgets. Currently, there is one Human Rights Investigator position vacant in Community Affairs.

There is a current case in Community Affairs that involves a dancing lesson business who have been in business for thirty years. A gay couple has filed a complaint because they were refused dancing lessons. Ms. Singer said there is no determination at this time and since it's under active investigation, the case cannot be discussed at this time. The City of Tampa offers no comment on this open case at this time. She said this case may appear in newspapers. Ms. Van Loveren asked if it's the business license that the board goes after and what would be the groundwork. Ms. Allison said the allegation is under Chapter 12, City of Tampa Human Rights Ordinance as a public accommodation case, and that here are case law statutes regarding this that involve public accommodation businesses. Ms. Allison said that the City of Tampa's role on a case with a public accommodation allegation under the City of Tampa Human Rights Ordinance is neutral for fact finding, information gathering, and making decision as an administrative agency, based on all of the information. Chairman Dinkins thought this was good publicity for Community Affairs but not for the business and asked if the angle for public accommodation would be the same as if they were excluded from a restaurant, movie, theater, etc., and Ms. Singer responded yes. Ms. Van Loveren this could be a vignette (scene) to use in the video: someone being turned away from a restaurant, in order for business owners to get a clear message on discrimination.

EEOC/Employment, Public Accommodations and /Fair Housing/ HUD Reports –

Ms. Betancourt said that Mr. Slater would mention a public accommodation case to members. She reported statistics for this fiscal year: 13 employment cases filed & waiting for 6 position statements, and three waiting to be assigned to investigators; 2 public accommodation cases filed; 9 housing cases filed, 1 remains open, 3 ramps built and 1 accessible parking spot nearby. So far \$121,600.00 dollars were collected in settlements. The Community Staff attended seminars in employment and housing. Ms. Gonzales continues to work on the web page and Ms. Marshall is working on extensive reports, and Ms. Sinnreich has information on an upcoming housing consortium, where Avery Freedman will be speaker.

ADA Disability Rights Coordinator - Karen Sinnreich

Ms. Sinnreich announced that the Paralyzed Veterans 33rd annual wheelchair games will be held in July 2013 and that about 700 veterans have registered. She has attended meetings within the past year and will

be at the control center to assist. About 2,500 persons are expected. About 3,000 volunteers will be needed. The Neighborhood and Community Relations office was contacted to help get the word out. Volunteers will need to attend a two-hour training on Saturday and Sunday and be able to commit to four hours. Hillsborough County schools were also contacted. A cover draft letter on accessibility is to be sent to businesses that the veterans are coming. It will be joint letter between the City of Tampa and Hillsborough County's alliance, and approval will be needed to use the City of Tampa seal. Chairman Dinkins suggested sending the letter to the Tampa Downtown Partnership. This information will be used to cut drive-by lawsuits on parking accessibility and will be sent electronically along with email links on service animals and parking.

Ms. Sinnreich continued by saying that the ADA criteria for parking are not the same as that of the State of Florida, which calls for wider spots for handicap parking. She said that the downtown business association and the restaurant association have been contacted, and that the letter would contain her contact as well as that of Sandy Sroka, Hillsborough County ADA Liaison. She would like that the letter be sent this month to give business owners a chance to work on accessible requirements such as ramps and painting of wider parking spaces.

Ms. Betancourt announced that April is Fair Housing month and on April 19, 2013 a Fair Housing Consortium will take place with participation by other housing entities. Avery Freedman is the speaker for this year's consortium. Copies of flyer were passed out.

Ms. Betancourt thanked the Community Affairs staff for their hard work. Margarita Gonzalez continues to work on website changes for Community Affairs, and Ms. Marshall continues to work diligently.

Old Business

(Closed Board Business) Update on Reasonable Cause Case – Ms. Singer said that the parties believe they can settle. She has reached out to them they had no objection that the Hearing Officer had set a timeline for resolution. The parties agreed but did not comply and the Hearing Officer is trying to reset the timeline. There was a small complication that the Hearing Officer's term expired on March 14, 2013, however, he has been reappointed for another term by the Mayor, and this reappointment will be on City Council's next agenda. Ms. Singer's role has been to reach out to the parties and the same setup may be followed when the last timeline was not met.

Ms. Allison informed Mr. Carswell, Ms. Abdelaziz and Mr. Perry that they were reappointed by the Mayor and the resolutions have been prepared.

Chairman Dinkins mentioned that Ms. Van Loveren's term may also expire on May 30, 2013 per email that he received from Conchita Tilton. Ms. Singer will check and work on the resolution to City Council for May 14th, that is, if her term expires. Chairman Dinkins asked Ms. Cortes to check Ms. Van Loveren's term dates on the roster.

Proposed Amendment Changes to Human Rights Ordinance – Ms. Singer said that amendments for the increase in board members to 15, which leaves four At-Large slots and reference to a quorum consisting of a majority of board members present for a vote have been prepared. She said that the two readings should take place, the first reading on May 2 and the second reading on May 16th. She informed members that there's a new electronic system in City Council for agendas, and everyone is trying to figure out how

it works. She also said that the board has the capability to call for a special meeting, but did not think there will be a issue.

New Business

Election of officers – Chairman Dinkins said that after review of the ordinance, elections did not have to occur annually and should be held on “as needed” basis. The elected officers are Chair, Vice Chair and the board has never had a secretary or treasurer. He informed members that this was his last term, since he served the maximum of three consecutive years. He said that although Anthony Carswell is serving as Vice Chairperson, he recommended a vote for Mr. Carswell as the new Chairperson. Chairman Dinkins opened the floor for discussion. Ms. Van Loveren made a **motion** for Anthony Carswell as Chairperson, Amy Mandel seconded the motion, and the **motion carried**. Ms. Van Loveren then made a **motion** that John Perry serve as Vice Chairperson and he accepted. The motion was seconded by Anna Ramos and the **motion carried** by all members present. Chairman Dinkins will review his file and forward documents, if any, to Mr. Carswell.

Board Member Term expirations- On behalf of Mayor Buckhorn, Human Rights Board members, and Community Affairs staff, Mr. Slater gave Chairman Dinkins a plaque acknowledging his service for 11 ½ yrs. on the board. A round of applause followed and a photo was taken by Michelle Robinson of Department of Neighborhood Services/Code Enforcement.

Next Meeting

The next meeting has been scheduled for June 12, 2013, at 8:30 a.m., at the German American Club, 2105 N. Nebraska Avenue, 2nd floor conference room, Tampa, FL.

Adjournment

A **motion** to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. Vazquez, seconded by Ms. Van Loveren, and the **motion passed** by all members present, to adjourn the meeting. This concluded the business of the Board at 9:35 a.m.

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