

Sullivan County Human Rights Commission
Minutes of the Monthly Meeting
Thursday, Dec. 4, 2014

Present: Chet Carlin, Roland Ward, Catherine Iral, Peggy Johanson, Sam Encarnacion, Gabriel Bertonazzi, Eric Monroe, Judy Balaban, Kathie Aberman

Approval of last month's minutes: Chet MaM to approve, Gabriel seconded; approved

I. Executive Director's Report

Discussion of the many complaints of problems with Family Services. Eric has been in touch with Legal Services of Hudson Valley, and they are willing to help, but he raises the question of whether we want (or are able) to go in that direction (legal action by the Commission). Many complaints were referred by Laura Quigley and Kathy Krieter to Aileen Gunther, but there is no guarantee they will go anywhere. We explored options for what we can do and discussed if complainants themselves should seek legal help. The point was raised that many people (1) are too stressed by circumstances to be able to pursue legal action on their own, (2) are without means of transportation to make trips to HVLS to discuss their situations, and (3) are often unaware of their right to a Fair Hearing.

Options:

1. Ask Laura, Kethy, etc. to make sure complainants know about Fair Hearings and how to proceed.
2. Organize a forum to educate people about their right to a Fair Hearing and how to proceed. (Catherine knows the process well; so does Sam; Gabriel on Outreach Committee will talk about this)
3. Request that Hudson Valley Legal Services come to Sullivan County, perhaps bi-monthly, to speak to people who have complaints and give legal advice about what they can do.

II. Executive Committee Report

A) Judy, Eric, Roland and Kathie met with legislators Samuelson and Steingart to discuss issues with the police (militarization, complaints of excessive violence by citizens). We discussed Everyday Democracy and Thriving Communities, told them about the forum we had organized in Monticello and the feedback we received from citizens, and explained that we wanted to pursue a path of increased communication between different parts of the community. We asked for their support, and in particular, for support by way of helping to fund trainers for folks in the community who would facilitate these conversations. They were

supportive and asked us to make a proposal for the idea and the financing and present it to the full legislature.

Also, Sam mentioned that he had worked with Matthew Lattimer (646-483-6753) of the USDOJ Community Stabilization Task Force, and that he was a good resource for us.

B) Strategic Plan

- Judy brought copies of the Strategic Plan to ask if anyone (especially those who hadn't been there) had questions.
- Judy has reached out to Everyday Democracy to get the ball rolling.

III. Issues Committee Report

One complainant from SC jail (many complaints from one person). Eric has contacted all the various people in the system, and all of the complaints are documented to be unfounded in this case.

IV. Outreach Committee Report

Tri-Valley Elementary School has requested that we return to present a program for International Day of Human Rights (December 10). This is set up for 9 A.M., with Judy, Kathie, and perhaps Sam facilitating, and perhaps Peggy observing.

V. Old Business (none brought up)

VI. New Business (none brought up)

VII. Public Comment (no public in attendance)

VIII. Adjournment was at 6:25 p.m.