

Louisiana Commission on Human Rights
Minutes
Monday, October 25, 2010
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Members Present:

Tamara Jacobson, Chairwoman
Marshall Brumfield
Angela Faulk

Members Absent:

Kirby Verret
Willie Littleton
Alvin Roche, Jr.
Eursla Hardy

Staff Present: Christa Davis, Dr. Leah Raby, and Lauren Grundy

Chairwoman Tamara Jacobson called the meeting to order at 11:55 a.m. and requested a roll call. There was no quorum. The meeting began.

Chairwoman Jacobson reported that Mrs. Wright was not in attendance due to an accident and that it was the first time Mrs. Wright had missed a meeting in her 11 years as Executive Director. Chairwoman Jacobson also acknowledged receipt of Commissioner Karen Ashford's letter of resignation and reminded the Commissioners that Commissioner Ashford had reported that she would be moving to Monroe at the July 2010 meeting. Chairwoman Jacobson offered commendation to Commissioner Ashford for her service to the Commission. It was then reported by Chairwoman Jacobson that there had been no change in budget appropriation and that the Budget Director from the Governor's Office was scheduled to attend the October 25, 2010 meeting. She further conveyed that LCHR is not able to secure any additional funding, but are hopeful in the future. Chairwoman Jacobson concluded her report and moved to the next item on the agenda, the Executive Director's report, which was presented by Dr. Leah Raby on behalf of Loyce Pierce Wright, Executive Director.

Dr. Raby acknowledged to the Commissioners that Mrs. Wright extended her regrets for absence due to the accident. She then proceeded to present the case status information. Dr. Raby indicated that LCHR investigative unit had successfully closed 95 cases; meeting EEOC's contractual obligation. In addition, LCHR requested and received an upward modification of 28 cases, closing a total of 123 cases. Dr. Raby indicated that the Intake Unit also successfully met its portion of the contract by processing 20 complaints on behalf of the EEOC. She mentioned that we had signed a new contract with the EEOC, but were in discussion on the required number of closures for the next federal fiscal year's contract. She further indicated that LCHR provided justification to the EEOC of LCHR's ability to investigate more cases. LCHR currently had a case inventory of 129 open cases.

Dr. Raby continued with the report stating that everyone should have received the announcement for the Request for Proposals and indicated that there was a copy available for the Commissioner's viewing. Dr. Raby indicated that Mrs. Wright had reported that Mattie Horton, Contract Investigator had exhausted her funding of \$49,000 over the past five years and before the remaining contractors experience the same, the Request for Proposals was generated and opened internally and to the public for consideration. Dr. Raby indicated that the proposal provided details regarding the expectations, qualifications and compensation for the role of

investigators with the Commission. She reported that the closing date for the receipt of the proposal is November 22, 2010 and the winner(s) would be announced by November 30, with the contract being executed before the year's end.

Dr. Raby continued with informing the Commissioners about the YWCA's Southwest Region new agenda, immigration reform. She stated that the YWCA was particularly interested in the wide spread barriers to assistance experienced by immigrant victims of domestic violence, trafficking and sexual assault. Consequently, she provided that the YWCA states that the lack of immigration status often makes women more likely to be exploited in the workplace, at home, and in accessing services and their civil legal rights. Dr. Raby noted that Mrs. Wright serves as the President of the New Orleans Chapter of the YWCA, which generates the connection.

She further reported that Mrs. Wright, in addition to 36 other participants, attended a meeting on October 6, 2010 with the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice and the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) at Dillard University to discuss the GuLF Oil Spill Cleanup Workers Study. The Gulf Worker Study (GuLF) will investigate potential short- and long-term health effects associated with the clean-up activities of the oil spill among a cohort of workers and volunteers involved in the Deepwater Horizon disaster.

Moving forward, Dr. Raby announced that 2010 commemorated the 50th anniversary for the girls that integrated the schools and for the first time they will meet the marshals that guarded them. She stated that the Louisiana Center for Civil Rights and Social Justice, the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities and the Amistad Research Center have partnered to host a series of events from November 11-14 in New Orleans. In addition, it was reported that Mrs. Wright is slated as a participant in the event at Tulane University and would welcome our presence. Additionally, it was provided that the Louisiana Center for Civil Rights and Social Justice (LA Civil Rights Museum Board) completed their strategic plan. The strategic planning objectives are intended to develop a shared articulation of: defining civil rights; institutional vision and mission; statewide programming and partnerships; and potential organizational structure, and to craft objectives and set action steps for implementation. Mrs. Wright serves on the board of the Louisiana Center for Civil Rights and Social Justice.

Dr. Raby reported that Mrs. Wright had been in discussion with Dr. Leonard, Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture to investigate and mediate cases contractually regarding African American farmers in the state of Louisiana that feel as though they have been discriminated against. Moreover, the Commission was also seeking to partner with the Attorney General's Office - Fair Housing Agency to conduct outreach across the State. Attorney Annette Seng and Darrell Berry were scheduled to attend to discuss the jurisdiction and function of their office.

In concluding the Executive Director's report presented on behalf of Mrs. Wright, Dr. Raby stated that Mrs. Wright attended the IAOHRA conference in August 2010 and provided material regarding the initiatives of the NAACP as submitted to Congress to share with the Commissioners. She also stated that Mrs. Wright has also scheduled to share the *Not in Our Town* video which focused on how citizens organized to combat hate activity in their communities.

Chairwoman Jacobson stated the next item on the agenda was Unfinished Business. There was none. She mentioned that a circulation for a date and time convenient for all Commissioners to attend the next meeting would be emailed to the Commissioners.

Chairwoman Jacobson asked if there was any New Business. Afterwards, she mentioned that Commissioner Faulk had shared that she had received a call on her cellular telephone from a constituent and asked that Commissioner Faulk elaborate on what had transpired.

Commissioner Faulk stated that the constituent had indicated that she had ascertained her name and number from a website. She said the constituent expressed that she was very concerned and disappointed that Commissioner Faulk was not aware of the reduction in staff at a mental facility in Pineville. Commissioner Faulk indicated that she asked the constituent was she knowledgeable of the Louisiana Commission on Human Rights' and the phone number and proceeded to provide it to her.

Dr. Raby stated that providing the LCHR's office phone number was the appropriate course of action and that the staff would direct the constituent accordingly. Dr. Raby stated that constituents can be very resourceful and perhaps the constituent retrieved Commissioner Faulk's cell phone number from the information submitted to the Governor's Office of Boards and Commissions because that office does publish phone numbers and addresses. However, Dr. Raby indicated that LCHR staff does not release that type of information.

Commissioner Brumfield stated that he receives calls of the same nature and directs the constituents to LCHR. Then he inquired as to who may have provided assistance to a recent constituent that he had directed to contact the office.

Dr. Raby stated that she spoke with the constituent and that she was calling on behalf of an illegal immigrant that was being sexually harassed. Dr. Raby said she informed the constituent that the burden of proof was on the person being harassed and directed her to the EEOC because the potential complainant was an illegal immigrant.

Chairwoman Jacobson stated she would love some training on what the rights are for someone who is in the state illegally that claims a human rights violation. She stated that this would be relevant information for the Commissioners, Staff and Investigators.

Dr. Raby stated she would look into her request and inform Mrs. Wright so that it could be placed on the Agenda for the next meeting.

Commissioner Faulk inquired about the development of Ms. Grundy's job description. Dr. Raby indicated that Mrs. Wright was working the job description. Subsequently, Dr. Raby emailed Ms. Grundy's job description on Mrs. Wright behalf after the meeting.

Chairwoman Jacobson ended the meeting at 12:55 p.m. There were no motions due to a lack of quorum.