

Duluth Human Rights Commission
Minutes
May 11, 2011

Commissioners Present:

Colleen Belk, Rebecca Domagala, Margie Nelson, Brian Thorbjørnsen, Emily Westerlund, Scott Yeazle.

Commissioners Absent:

Cruz Mendoza, Jennifer Barry, Michele Naar-Obed, Robert Kaner.

Others Present:

Henry Banks, Linda Wall of the Lake Superior Community Health Center, Bob Grytdahl of Duluth Human Rights Office.

Meeting called to order at 5:05 p.m.

Bob Grytdahl reported to the Commission that Tracy Montanye resigned from the Commission.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion made by Rebecca Domagala to approve minutes from April 13, 2011 meeting, 2nd by Colleen Belk. Motion passes 6-0.

Speaker & Discussion:

Scott Bol from Community Action Duluth presented on employment and economic disparities. He noted that only 400 people in the U.S. make more money than half of the entire population of the U.S. A "People's Budget" would adequately address the nation's education, health care, infrastructure and other needs, and is possible with additional taxes on the extremely wealthy. Scott suggested looking at the everydaydemocracy.org website. Scott suggested the possibility of developing Study Circles in the city to find common ground on how to build a healthy community. Two brochures from Community Action Duluth were distributed:

1. "We Are Working & We are Poor" notes:
 - A. The poverty rate in Duluth (25%) is higher than both the state of Minnesota (9.6%) and the U.S. as a whole (13.2%).
 - B. The latest Job Vacancy Survey (April 2010) from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development shows that in Northeast Minnesota there are 14,000 unemployed workers competing for only 1,400 unfilled jobs.
 - C. A family of four in St. Louis County needs to draw a combined annual salary of \$51,702 to afford the basic cost of living. However, in 2009 the median household income in St. Louis County was just \$43,369.
 - D. "Bridge to Employment" details the Community Action Duluth program designed to assist African American job seekers to gain employment and develop job placement opportunities. Discussion about this brochure noted that the unemployment rate for

African Americans in Minnesota is three times that of Whites – the worst unemployment disparity in the U.S.

Business:

1. Human Rights Commission Officer Election will be postponed to the June 8, 2011 meeting. The following positions will be elected by Commissioners: Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary.
2. Scott Yeazle provided a brief report on the Minnesota League of Human Rights Commissions, which as Chair of the Duluth Commission, he is a part of. Scott indicated that he will provide a more thorough report next month, but relayed concerns that the League had regarding the budget cuts coming to the State's Department of Human Rights.
3. Next month's topic will be on Disparities in Health Care. Linda Wall from the Lake Superior Community Health Center will present.
4. Suggestion made that Fair Housing be discussed at the November 2011 meeting.

Reports on Community Events:

1. "Racial Equity Gathering" organized by the Organizing Apprenticeship Project (OAP) is scheduled for May 12, 2011 in Duluth at the Central Hillside Community Center from 5:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.
2. "Statewide Racial Equity Gathering" is also organized by the Organizing Apprenticeship Project (OAP), and intends to bring racial equity advocates from across the state to Minneapolis on June 12, 2011 from 1:30pm to 5:30pm. The event will be held at the First Universalist Church of Minneapolis, 3400 Dupont Ave. S. in Minneapolis. There is discussion of coordinating a bus from Duluth.
3. "Day of Remembrance", marking the anniversary of the lynching of three African American men and sponsored by Clayton, Jackson, McGhie Memorial, Inc. (CJMM) is scheduled for June 15, 2011, beginning at 11:30am at the Memorial site at the corner of 1st St. and 2nd Ave. E in Duluth.
4. Sexual Assault Response Volunteer training is scheduled for Wednesdays in June 2011 from 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Trained volunteers will be able to assist with the crisis line and other duties. Contact Em Westerlund at 726-1442 to register.

Meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brian Thorbjørnsen
BT:jm