

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING – ROOM 2A
HARTFORD, CT 06106
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 14, 2012
2:00 P.M.**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Andrew Norton, Chairperson
Edward Mambruno, Secretary
Dawn Niles
Tracey Gove
Edith Pestana
Lyn May
Suzanne Tirado
Patricia Wrice

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

Cheryl Lynn Clarke

STAFF PRESENT

Robert J. Brothers, Jr., Executive Director
David Teed, Assistant Attorney General
James O'Neill, Legislative Liaison
Cheryl Sharp, Human Rights Attorney III
Alvin K. Bingham, Supervisor, Affirmative Action/Contract Compliance
Valerie Kennedy, Human Rights & Opportunity Representative
Neva E. Vigezzi, Affirmative Action Program Analyst
Margaret Peters, Secretary II

I. CHAIRPERSON

Chairperson Andrew Norton convened the Wednesday, March 14, 2012 regular monthly meeting of the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities to order at 2:05 p.m.

II. SECRETARY

Commissioner Mambruno requested approval of the minutes of the Wednesday March 14, 2012 regular Commission meeting. A motion was made by Commissioner Gove to approve the January 11, 2012 minutes as presented and seconded by Commissioner Pestana.

However, Commissioner Niles noted that the minutes did not reflect two motions that were done at last meeting. One was that a letter was sent to newspapers regarding the East Haven police incident. The other was that the Governor was pulling back \$1,000,000 that was to be used for the disparity study. Letters were to be sent to the Black Caucus and the Puerto Rican Caucus to appeal for restoration in this decision. The letters were mailed to these Committees. These motions were presented by Commissioner Niles and seconded by Commissioner Clarke.

Chairperson Norton asked for a motion to accept Commissioner Niles motion/recommendation for an amendment to the minutes to include these two motions. Commissioner May seconded the motion. Commissioner Wrice abstained.

The motion was approved. Chairperson Norton did not vote on the motion.

III. GUEST SPEAKERS – Human Rights Referees

Alvin Wilson, Ellen Bromley and Michele Mount are the new Human Rights Referees. Referee Wilson stated that he and Referee Bromley were appointed by the Governor in December 2011.

Referee Wilson stated that they are very busy. They were currently reviewing the backlog cases (over 100) to make a determination as to the status of each. There are approximately 130 cases in inventory now. We are also processing new cases as they come in. There have been a lot of Status Conferences and Public Hearings have been scheduled through June of next year.

Referee Bromley stated that she is happy to be here. She comes from Stamford, CT and has thirteen (13) years with the city of Stamford where one of her responsibilities was the point of entry for human rights in Stamford where she took in complaints and questions. Referee Bromley is looking forward to this challenge.

Referee Mount stated that she is also happy to be here; it is a subject matter that is something she has thoroughly enjoyed. The service is of great importance to the people of the State of Connecticut, and it will be rewarding and challenging to her.

Chairperson Norton noted that it was once the case under law that there were seven referees, then two years ago or more the law changed and said there would be five referees and as of July 1, 2011 the law changed and said there would be three. There is a large backlog but the team is not as large as it has been in the past.

IV. OUTREACH REPORT - Attorney Cheryl Sharp from the Legal Division

Attorney Cheryl Sharp from the Legal Division along with Program Director of the Governor's Prevention Partnership, Lisa Tregoning, were interviewed on 95.7 Clear Channel Radio on bullying and harassment.

CHRO was awarded a \$39,000 Grant to partner with the Governor's Prevention Partnership and to do a project where we will be going out to 5 Housing Authorities and 2 Open Choice Schools providing information and training regarding harassment and bullying in schools and busing integration.

CHRO will sponsor a Housing Fair on April 16, 2012 from 12-3 at the State Capitol in the Old Judiciary room to educate the public regarding state and federal housing laws. CHRO Attorneys Jacobsen, Simonetti, Sharp, Zamlowski and Fox will be spearheading this effort.

V. AFFIRMATIVE ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS – VOTE REQUIRED

A. Staff Recommendations: ***Approval***

1. Department of Correction

Chairperson Norton asked for a motion to accept staff recommendation for approval of the Affirmative Action Plan for the Department of Correction and that the motion includes the retention of their annual filing status. Such a motion was made by Commissioner Wrice and seconded by Commissioner Gove.

Chairperson Norton called for a vote on the motion to accept the staff recommendation for approval of the Department of Correction and the retention of their annual filing status. The motion was approved unanimously. Chairperson Norton did not vote on the motion.

VI. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Request for Exemption from Certain Contract Compliance Requirements Concerns a Contract Between the University of CT Health Center and Probity Medical Research, Inc.

Chairperson Norton asked for a motion to grant approval of the Request for Exemption from Certain Contract Compliance Requirements Concerning a Contract Between the University of CT Health Center and Probity Medical Research, Inc. Such a motion was made by Commissioner Wrice and seconded by Commissioner Gove.

Chairperson Norton called for a vote on the motion to grant approval of the Request for Exemption from Certain Contract Compliance Requirements Concerning a Contract Between the University of CT Health Center and Probity Medical Research, Inc. The motion was approved unanimously. Chairperson Norton did not vote on the motion.

VII. DIVISION REPORTS

A. Legislative Report

Jim O'Neill Legislative Report: As requested by the Commissioners, a letter was communicated to the Black Caucus, the Puerto Rican Caucus and the Governor concerning the Governor's budget. We also did the resolution.

We have been working on a number of things such as H.B. 5014 which is change in the budget relevant to H.B. 5016 which is CHRO merger with the Office of Protection and Advocacy.

Our bills have been raised in Judiciary with our Legislative proposals. That will be up for Public Hearing shortly. One of the proposals included adding racial profiling to protected classes and there are three bills to provide protected class status to the unemployed and veterans.

B. Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Brothers announced that he was able to hire an Administrative Assistant, who is much needed since his Executive Secretary position was vacant for the past two years. He is also in the process of hiring two new HRO Representatives.

Executive Director Brothers stated that he knew nothing about the merger of CHRO and Office of Protection and Advocacy until a few hours before it was to go public which is also happening with other agencies that are being consolidated.

There are bills that affect the Commission both directly and indirectly which both Jim O'Neill and he are involved with.

The garage is closed as of March 13th. An Engineering study was done on the garage and it was determined that the garage was unsafe! We are currently using four parking lots with the closest going to personnel by seniority. There are shuttle buses to get back and forth to the front of the building.

VIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

None

X. RETURN TO REGULAR SESSION

None

IX. VOTE ON EXECUTIVE SESSION ITEMS
(Requires a Vote by Commissioners on the Record)

None

XI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Commission, it was moved by Commissioner Mambruno and seconded by Commissioner May to adjourn the meeting at 3:30 p.m. The motion carried unanimously. Chairperson Norton did not vote.