

**County of Kern
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION-MINUTES**

**Regular Meeting
Monday April 16, 2012**

Commissioners Present: Jewelle Scales (js), Linda Carrick (lc), Marisa Banks(mb), Tomeka Powell (tp), Carmen Bernal (cb), Kathy Stobert (ks), Marcus Mitchell (mm)

Commissioners Absent: Ed Herrera, Doborah Hess, Andre Taylor

Others Present: Erica Stephens, Leonardo Chavez, Mike Brown, Eugene Frye, Francisca Garcia, EEO Officer Michael Goulart (mg)

Meeting called to order at 5:30

1. **FLAG SALUTE 5:30**
2. Welcome Community members
3. (js) read Human Relations Commission Mission Statement
4. **PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS:**

Erica Stephens from Greater Bakersfield Legal Assistance: April is National Fair Housing Month. The local Fair Housing Project is celebrating their one-year milestone. Community meetings have been conducted throughout Kern County. Two more forums are scheduled in Bakersfield. One is tomorrow night from 4-6 p.m. at Healthnet on Niles St. Another meeting will be held at GBLA offices at 601 California Ave. from 6-8 p.m. Information will be provided about the grant project and fair housing rights.

The GBLA forums will culminate in a conference on April 24, 2012 at the Kern County Mental Health building, 3300 Truxtun Ave., Bakersfield. The keynote speaker will be a fair housing attorney from the bay area. Sessions will be on multiple topics including: National Origin discrimination, Domestic Violence issues and Barriers to Community Living for individuals with disabilities. There is no cost to attend the conference.

5. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

November 21, 2011 regular meeting
Motion to approve with correction: tp, 2nd: cb, All Ayes

6. **NEW BUSINESS: none**
7. **OLD BUSINESS**

a) **Election of officers**

(mg) I have prepared copies of the HRC Bylaws regarding election of officers for Commissioner review. Seven Commissioners are present tonight which meets the requirements of 2/3 of elected Commissioners being present to conduct elections. We currently have vacancies in the Secretary and Vice-Chair positions. We will first ask for nominations and votes will be conducted by written ballot.

Vice-Chair – Commissioner Carrick nominates Commissioner Mitchell. Commissioner Scales nominates Commissioner Stobert. Commissioner Mitchell declines nomination and nominates Commissioner Banks. Commissioner Stobert declines nomination. Commissioner Banks is elected Vice-Chair by a vote of 7-0.

Secretary – Commissioner Banks nominates Commissioner Bernal. Commissioner Banks accepts. Commissioner Bernal is elected Secretary by a vote of 7-0.

b) Subcommittee selection and assignments.

Commissioner Stobert will chair the Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Committee.

Commissioner Powell will join the Education/Essay Contest Committee.

Commissioner Scales will join the Judicial and Legislative Review Committee.

Commissioner Bernal will join the Education/Essay Contest and Training/Mentor program Ad-Hoc Committee.

Commissioner Mitchell will chair the Annual Report Ad-Hoc Committee and join the Training/Mentor program Ad-Hoc Committee.

Commissioner Banks will join the Education/Essay Contest Committee and Community & Media Outreach Committee.

8. **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

a) Community & Media Outreach – Hess, Chair
No report

b) Education/Essay Contest – Herrera, Chair, Hess
No report

c) Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action –
No report

- d) Grants/Funding –
No report
- e) Housing – Commissioner Carrick, Chair
Commissioner Payne requested Erica Stephens from GBLA to provide information related to the Fair Housing Project. Ms. Stephens report is as follows:

The project started in April 2011 and has been charged with investigating charges of discrimination in housing as well as providing outreach and education. Between April and December of 2011 73 cases alleging discrimination were opened. Not all of these cases ended up being a fair housing case, although many were. A breakdown of the cases by protected class found that 2 cases were based on Arbitrary Physical Appearance; 20 cases were based on Disability; 5 based on Family Status; 4 based on National Origin; 3 based on Race; 3 based on Religion; 8 based on Sex (which includes gender and victims of domestic violence); 1 based on Sexual Orientation; 4 based on Source of Income. (numbers do not equal 73 cases)

Four complaints were filed with the Department of Housing and Urban Development and three were filed with the Department of Fair Employment and Housing.

GBLA is willing to give presentations on Fair Housing to interested groups.

(cp) Of the three cases based on Religion, was there a particular Religion?

(Stephens) It was not focused on any particular Religion.

(mg) Do you know if the HUD and DFEH were resolved?

(Stephens) They are ongoing complaints which take a while to resolve. If the cases go to litigation they take even longer to resolve.

(cb) Is the report available online?

(Stephens) We have to report to HUD and those reports may be available online.

(cb) I am just curious to understand the different classifications more in depth. If we were to address a certain issue it would be nice to have more information on what specific type of information may be present.

(Stephens) The type of discrimination can vary from how rules are applied to members of different Races (in terms of lenience) to real estate agents only showing members of particular races homes in certain parts of town. Sometimes the discrimination is more blatant and other times it can be much more difficult to prove.

- f) Judicial & Legislative Review –
No report
- g) Law Enforcement - Commissioner Herrera, Chair
No report
- h) Special Issues –
No report
- i) Access and Functional Needs –
No report
- j) Annual Report Ad-hoc Committee –
No report

9. **STAFF REPORT:**

(mg) I am pleased to see all of the Commissioners here tonight and that we are able to conduct business. Please continue to communicate with each other between meetings if you have issues that you would like to discuss. I would also like to thank the members of the Grand Jury for coming back to see us.

10. **COMMISSION MEMBER PRESENTATIONS OR ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

(cb) United Way started a public policy committee and its going to be very active in the community aimed at targeting issues in education, income and health. We are formalizing it now and looking for community volunteers to serve on the committee. United Way staff will be attending Capitol Hill tomorrow and Wednesday to talk to legislators about continuing funding for programs like Healthy Families and Volunteer Income Tax Assistance.

(mm) I saw your presentation and I think that all of the Commissioners may be interested in the presentation and the information that you have to share.

(cb) I would be happy to share more information with the Commission and I am also interested in taking on an issue that is common to all districts such as education and I wouldn't mind leading that for all districts. I want to serve all districts the best that I can.

(mb) I toured the GBLA facility last week and met the attorneys on staff. One of the issues that we discussed was the expulsion rate in Kern County. We all know that if you get onto that track (expulsion) it feeds right into the penal system.

(cb) That may tie into other issues such as reading levels and prison population rates. There is already a movement to get third graders reading at a third grade level.

(mb) I see this issue as a way to get people interested and involved in what the Commission is doing.

(js) I have an announcement. I have struggled with this but I think that this is the fairest thing. I need to step down from the Chair. I am confident that the Commissioners that we have can lead and do an excellent job. My goal is to stay on the Commission. The Chair plays a critical role and I want to make sure that the Commission continues to be a driving force in the community and we have enough talent in this room that we can make that happen.

11. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to Adjourn: Mitchell, 2nd: Carrick, All Ayes