

**CITY OF NORWALK
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
FEBRUARY 19, 2009**

ATTENDANCE: Carol L. Frank, Chairman; Daisy Franklin; Rahoul Dupervil; Julius Gamble; Andrew Mattiello; Diana Paladino; Brian J. Smith; Vicky Su; Karen Tobin (7:45)

STAFF: Adam Bovilsky, Human Relations Director

OTHERS: Frank MacEachern, Stamford Advocate-Newspapers

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by the Chairman.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: JANUARY 15 AND FEBRUARY 4, 2009 MEETINGS

The following corrections were made:

On page 1 “Chairwoman Ms. Frank” should be either “Ms. Frank” or “Chairman Frank”—just be consistent; under B) there should be “The” before November Special Meeting; on the last line, that after people should be “who”. On page 2, under Director’s Report, second sentence next to commissioners, “whose” should be before terms; the last paragraph, sentence 2, major should be mayor. On page 3, abefore Brown should be “Bea” not B; Americans Disabilities should read Americans with Disabilities; next paragraph should start with Mr. Bovilsky not “His”, and “are continue” should read are “to”; the next sentence, “Carol’s” should be “Chairman Frank’s”; on page 4, under HR DAY second sentence, “primary” should be “primarily” .

**** MS. FRANKLIN MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE JANUARY 15
MINUTES WITH CORRECTIONS NOTED.**

**** MS. PALADINO SECONDED**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

The following corrections were made to the February minutes, as follows:

On page 1, third paragraph Mrs. Tobin should be “Ms.”; the next sentence begins with “That” and should start “This two-week extension”; in the third paragraph reads maybe “they” and should be “the department”.

- ** MS. FRANKLIN MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE FEBRUARY 4 SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES WITH CORRECTIONS NOTED.**
- ** MS. PALADINO SECONDED**
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Ms. Frank stated that Fair Housing was still waiting for resolution on use of the term "work force" in printed literature. The educational seminar is scheduled for beginning of May with the Board of Realtors as a co-sponsor. Ms. Franklin added that NAACP has agreed to be a co-sponsor. The film "Brick by Brick", which is a 50-minute documentary will be shown and followed by a half-hour discussion. In summary, Ms. Frank stated that like all other departments the Human Relations Commission was waiting for a response to the budget.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Adam Bovilsky presented a copy of the letter from the Director and Chair of the committee to Dr. Barbara Amodio thanking her for her years of service to the community. He also welcomed Elizabeth Merced-Surapine onto the Commission. Ms. Franklin asked why Ms. Amodio was no longer on the commission, and who was now going to be a part of program development and training and how was the HRC going to operate without her. Ms. Frank responded that Ms. Amodio's term had expired, but that she has graciously offered her assistance with projects. She also stated that the current members of the commission would need to step up to get involved with program matters.

Mr. Bovilsky mentioned that the Mayor was not moving quickly on appointments due the recent budget issues. He indicated there would be more in-dept discussion of the budget situation. Mr. Dupervil asked about training and Mr. Bovilsky answered that once the interviews were completed he would reschedule the actual training dates.

Ms. Tobin arrived at 7:45 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

- ** MS. PALADINO MOVED TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS CASE #228-08E AND CASE 229-08E.**
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The Committee went into Executive Session at 7:48 p.m. and reconvened into Public Session at 8:42 p.m.

MOTIONS ON CASES

- ** MS. TOBIN MOVED TO NOT HEAR CASE 229-08E (UPS).**
- ** MR. MATTIELLO SECONDED.**
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

- ** MS. PALADINO MOVED TO HEAR CASE 229-08E (TEAMSTERS LOCAL 191.)**
- ** MS. FRANKLIN SECONDED.**
- ** MOTION FAILED WITH 5 VOTES IN FAVOR (MATTIELLO, PALADINO, GAMBLE, FRANK, FRANKLIN) AND FOUR VOTES IN OPPOSITION (SMITH, TOBIN, SU, DUPERVIL).**

The motion failed because six positive votes were required.

BILLS AND COMMUNICATION

Ms. Frank again mentioned that in addition to the letter to Ms. Amodio that was presented, there was also a sharply worded letter to Mr. Wright requesting his resignation. Mr. Wright has not attended meetings and has not been an active commissioner.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Ms. Frank again mentioned that the HR day status was the same. Janis at Neon is to provide more information. Some publications are out of print, such as Youth Artworks. Relative to Diversity Day, she did not know what was being done at this time.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Bovilsky read from his detailed written report the 2009-10 budget situation. He presented an overview summary that the city is de-funding 29 positions, and depending on the outcome of the recommended Retirement Package and Collective Bargaining with the unions, that number may change. He referred to a newspaper article that appeared in The Hour entitled, "Personnel panel to discuss retirement deals" that was distributed to the group. He provided a historical overview of the department role in view of the city's mission statement. He highlighted as was listed on his written report, that with recent additional responsibilities including monitoring the Americans with Disabilities Act and Affirmative Action and Minority Plans, there had been no additions in staff. Mr. Mattiello stated that the department really needs Larry and cannot operate without him.

Mr. Bovilsky restated the impact of this issue is not only 1/3 of the total budget but in actuality 50% of programmatic personnel work that would all fall upon the director. The city is not in a position to get rid of the commission, but the defunding of positions would result in a drastic cut in services not required by state or city codes. He referred to the statistics sheet of numbers of intakes, referrals, and contacts, and again stated the negative impact of the defunding of positions; also it would have a domino effect on the department. Unlike DPW for example, that will also have substantial cuts, the percentage compared to a small department like Human Relations is devastating at 33%.

Ms. Su asked what is the process and when is the termination date, is there anything the commission can do to avoid this action. Mr. Bovilsky said it is the same as other departments that there is a public hearing with the Board of Estimation and Taxation on March 2. Prior to that session, he will be meeting with the Mayor and personnel in the finance department and will have informal discussions to present the issues that the defunding will have on both the Human Relations and Fair Rent Departments.

Ms. Su then asked if we should write letters stating the commission's position relative to the negative impact of such a severe cut in staffing. Mr. Bovilsky indicated that would certainly be a good idea and suggested that members draft letters, but to hold off on submitting them for now until after his meeting on February 24th. That meeting would determine what alternatives have been presented. For example, if the retirement package passes in whole or in part, it may alleviate some of the pressure. That, along with possible union concessions could create ways to avoid the loss of Larry's position.

Mr. Dupervil stated that there are major projects that cannot be tackled due to lack of resources and now with this situation there would be a tremendous burden on the director and Nilsa. Mr. Bovilsky stated that the true victims of this situation would be the low income families who cannot afford legal counsel, and there will be fewer and fewer places for them to turn to for help.

Ms. Su stated emphatically that the commission will not accept this action, and will be unwilling to cut a position without a fight. Mr. Bovilsky stated that there are other scenarios that will be discussed. Also, Ms. Frank stressed that the burden of this action will fall on Adam, that there are just so many hours in the day and services will just not be there for the department to be in a position to respond. The city should be prepared for the result that the Human Relations Department may cease to exist. Mr. Bovilsky again restated that positions are defunded not cut or eliminated. However, as additional referrals have occurred resulting from day to day requirements, not to mention major projects that have been on-going for a long time that will continue to not be addressed. The secretary is not in a position to take on more; she is currently very busy and simply cannot respond to the actions required.

Ms. Frank stated that the commission is one of only a few in the state that provides the kind of service that the Human Relations Department does. The city may not be in a position to get rid of the department, but the defunding of positions would result in a drastic cut in services not required by state or city codes. Ms. Frank stated that the commission should allow Mr. Bovilsky to proceed with his discussions and to await the outcome of meeting on February 24. From that meeting, a departmental strategy will be developed to move ahead for the March 2nd meeting, which all of the Commission may have to be prepared to make more of an appeal.

In addition to the public hearing on March 2, with the Board of Estimation and Taxation, there is a Special Meeting on March 12, which is a hearing on the Fernandes case in Common Council Chambers at 6:30 p.m.

The next regularly scheduled meeting is March 19, 2009 at 7:30 p.m., which is a public hearing to be held in the Mary T. Bea Brown Room.

**** MR. DUPERVIL MOVED TO ADJOURN.**
**** MR. GAMBLE SECONDED.**
**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Knox
Telesco Secretarial Services