



Carbondale Human Relations Commission

Minutes – October 6, 2014
Carbondale Civic Center ~ 6:30 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Joseph Brown, Jerrold Hennrich, Eric McMillan, Faith Miller, Kareem Shariati, Dora Weaver

Commissioners Excused: Peg Falcone

Commissioners Absent: Lauren Bonner

Study Circle Staff Present: Sarah Heyer

Guests Present: Cathy Field, Elius Reed

Staff Present: Interim Police Chief Jeff Grubbs, Deborah McCoy

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Hennrich at 6:32 p.m.

MINUTES

Motion was made by Commissioner Weaver and seconded by Commissioner Brown to approve the minutes of the September 8, 2014 meeting with the correction that Interim Police Chief Grubbs indicated that he met with all the officers and staff within a week. Motion carried.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

October 7, 2014 Hispanic Heritage Month Speaker at the Lesar Law School at 2:30 p.m. A lecture will also be presented at Shryock Auditorium at 6:00 pm.

October 11, 2014 Health and Safety Fair Free Clinic for Children. Carbondale Civic Center, 12 noon to 3:00 p.m. Sponsored by the Carbondale Police and Fire Departments, Dr. Brian Bird, Julie Bird, Dr. Doug Baker, Wells Fargo, and several other agencies and organizations. There will be free screenings for children as well as the Ident-A-Kid program. The event is free to the public.

October 19, 2014 Carbondale Branch NAACP Freedom Fund Banquet. Carbondale Civic Center, 5:00 p.m. Dr. Harriet Wilson Barlow, speaker. Tickets:\$30 each, \$55 per couple.

October 27, 2014 Race, Policing & Justice Symposium. Carbondale Civic Center, 4:00 pm – 7:00pm. Sponsors: SIU-C School of Journalism, SIU-C Imagining Geographies, Gateway Journalism Review, SIU-C College of Mass Communication and Media Arts, SIU-C College of Liberal Arts.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Reed commented on the University of Virginia missing student Hannah Graham and the quick identification and arrest of Jesse Matthews as the last person believed to have seen Ms. Graham and the

person responsible for the murder of three other females. Mr. Reed indicated that in the cases of Molly Young and Pravin Varughese, Richard Minton and Gaege Bethune have yet to be arrested. He stated that if Hannah Graham had gone missing in Carbondale, the case would still be unresolved. He commented that the fight in the streets in front of Hanger 9 was not real. Mr. Reed stated that he heard that individuals with Section 8 from St. Louis and other areas will be moving to the new apartments being built on South Illinois Avenue (formerly the 710 Bookstore location).

STUDY CIRCLES REPORT

Coordinator Heyer reported the group met October 1. Members of the group participated in the Night Out at Turley Park. They are working on Map Your Neighborhood and moving it up to the regional level. Members were present at the Neighborhood Business District Reform meeting and submitted a couple of suggestions to the Planning Committee. Coordinator Heyer announced that there probably would not be a Neighborhood Alliance meeting in January as there has not been a lot of response and feedback from past meetings. Commissioner Heyer commented on the need to continue the dialogue meetings with police that was started some time ago, as the meetings could provide an outlet for individuals to express thoughts and feelings, and perhaps avoid a Ferguson situation.

NON-VIOLENT CARBONDALE PROJECT

No report.

OLD BUSINESS

Law Enforcement Reports: Interim Chief Grubbs commented that it is not his intent to not fulfill requests that can be fulfilled. The new records management system was approved by City Council and was from one of the top tier-two companies. The new system replaces the 14-year old system that has been out of maintenance for the past four years. The new system is customizable and can be set up to include things such as suspect information. The target go live date for the new system is sometime in February. Old data will be converted to the new system, and fields will be added for new information.

Interim Chief Grubbs stated that the information he has regarding the incident on Illinois Avenue is disturbing. There is video and the sequence of events are not in order and are a small part of what actually happened. The individuals involved in the incident represent a very small percentage of African Americans in the community or who attend the university. It is no different than what happened in the 90s when it was white students. Unfortunately sometimes the incidents with African Americans get the largest headlines. He indicated that he has very high praise for the officers who handled themselves very well. He confirmed that there were batteries on that evening, and six individuals were taken into custody, one of whom was armed. Most of the individuals came from the LaFaogata Taqueria Restaurant. The lack of venues available is a problem in this community for African American entertainment. It is not a university-specific problem and it's not a community-specific problem. Regardless of whether university students are involved, it makes the university and the community look bad.

Commissioner McMillan asked whether there is anyone who is willing to start discussions about these issues. Interim Chief Grubbs indicated that those discussions started the day following the incident. Students have a task force and there are other groups who include city and university administration. Commissioner Brown stated that the focus of the discussions on campus have been about violence on campus – sexual violence, domestic violence, and so forth. Black students are also scared because they are beginning to feel that everyone is looking at them and are scared of them, and feel they are being targeted. Violence scares all audiences, and

not just white audiences. Most of the discussion groups that he is aware of have been populated by young black men because they want to talk about this issue. The more people there are talking, the better it is for everybody. Interim Chief Grubbs spoke about the support the SIU Department of Public Safety and the Jackson County Sheriff Department, and Carbondale Police Department provide each other.

Questions were asked about Halloween and Interim Chief Grubbs stated that the Department is prepared for contingencies as they occur. Volunteers are needed to serve on the Pumpkin Patrol as extra eyes and ears to keep children and the community safe. Anyone Interested should contact Sergeant Corey Kemp at the Police Department.

Commissioner Shariati commented on how professional the officers handled the situation on the strip, especially in light of what happened in Ferguson. Some individuals were openly taunting officers, but the Carbondale police officers calmly and professionally handled the situation. Interim Chief Grubbs said he was in the St. Louis area when the incident occurred and he communicated with the Department that same evening to let officers know their work in handling the situation was appreciated. One mistake by an officer or the individual on the scene with the weapon, could have resulted in something that would not have been good for this community. The action by our police officers kept the situation from escalating. Ms. Field commented that with the Ferguson shooting, it was not so much about the shooting of the young man, as terrible as that was, but with how the situation was handled by the police after the shooting.

Commissioner Brown commented that there seems to be an awful lot happening on campus and in the community. He stated that although he can be disappointed and/or filled with grief, he is not surprised anymore considering all that he has witnessed in his 45 years of teaching. There is some element of lawlessness with all the eruptions on campus, in the streets, and in the dorms. It does not seem as simple as needing more orientation or more police. Black students are saying that what they are hearing is that more background checks are needed and only certain kinds of students are being recruited. That says that there is an overreaction to squelch something that cannot be squelched. Some of the worst and most saddening incidents that have happened around here are not going to go anywhere because people are not willing to push them any further. Commissioner Brown stated that he does not know how to educate people to step folks back so there is not worry about four or five people gathering. If there is the attitude that "we're watching you because we know you're going to do something," nothing will change. Commissioner Miller commented that from a university employee's position, the heat is constantly on SIU. She stated that she had conversations with her students and faculty about the student attacks and the video, advising them to exercise safety by letting someone know they will be out, buddying up, or calling transit. Commissioner McMillan commented that young people should continue to be taught that their standard of behavior is determined by themselves. Commissioner Brown stated that too many have the attitude that no one can tell me anything. Ms. Field commented that the difference between young people now and years ago is guns.

HRC Responsibilities, Role, Charges

Vice Chair: Motion was made by Commissioner McMillan and seconded by Commissioner Miller that Commissioner Brown serve as the Vice Chair of the Human Relations Commission. The vote was unanimous.

Restructured Agenda: Postponed until Commissioner Falcone can be present.

Vacancies: There are three vacancies -the HRC is comprised of 11 members. One of the three vacancies should be held by a SIU student.

Education Campaign Committee: Commissioner Weaver reported that she and Commissioner Falcone were working with staff members, Donna Butcher and Mark Jones, to develop the web page. Pictures and other information are needed. Commissioner Miller commented that she may have some photographs.

Community Discussions

Public Forum on Policing: Will be planned after the symposium.

Racial Justice Coalition: Ms. Field explained more about Reverend Didace Kimana and his visit tentatively scheduled for the latter part of January or in February. The Racial Justice Coalition is seeking co-sponsors, and funding is not needed for the Reverend Kimana's trip. The HRC volunteered to serve as a co-sponsor and communicated that to Rev. Ingebritsen at the September HRC meeting. Chair Hennrich will follow-up and keep the HRC informed.

NEW BUSINESS

Symposium: The symposium will be held on Monday, October 27, 2014, at the Civic Center, from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00. Chair Hennrich is facilitating the panel on Race, Policing, and Justice in Carbondale. He stated that the panel discussion should provide a good springboard for HRC's forum on policing in Carbondale. Commissioner Shariati commented that the School of Journalism will also sponsor a series of Civic Soul workshops in January.

Chair Hennrich spoke on the towing fees that are charged by the City of Carbondale. There is a \$400 administrative fee that is paid to the City before an individual pays the towing company fee and is able to get the vehicle back. The cost impacts those who are most vulnerable. Citizens will be encouraged to make their opinions known at City Council meeting. Commissioner Brown compared the fees to some of those charged by the City of Ferguson that are now being discontinued or changed to limit the negative impact on their citizens.

NEXT MEETING: November 3, 2014, 6:30 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, motion was made by Commissioner Brown and seconded by Commissioner Shariati to adjourn.

Recorded by Deborah McCoy _____