

**Minutes
City of New Orleans
Human Relations Commission
12:00 PM Thursday, December 16, 2010
New Orleans City Hall
1300 Perdido St.**

Present: Aqeel Abdul Salaam, Therese Badon, Larry Bagneris Jr., Rabbi Edward Cohn, Beverly Greenwood, Joe Halm, Rev. Douglas M. Haywood, Georgette Ioup, Stephany Lyman, Johnny Messinger, Jane Parker, Rev. Phoebe Roaf, Petrice Sams-Abiodun, Craig Stewart, Jamie Tran, Jenny Yanez

Absent: Michie Bissell, Russ Carll, Martin Gutierrez, Dawn Segura (Legal Counsel)

I. Call to Order at 12:00 p.m.

II. Installation of Human Relations Commission Members by the Honorable Monique Morial

III. Election of Officers

- **Chairperson** – Rabbi Cohn nominated Jane Parker as the 2011 chairperson. With no other nominations, the nomination was accepted.
- **Vice Chairperson** – Stewart nominated Therese Badon as the 2011 vice chairperson. With no other nominations, the nomination was accepted.
- **Secretary** – Parker nominated Joe Halm as the 2011 secretary. With no other nominations, the nomination was accepted.
- **Treasurer** – Greenwood nominated Michie Bissell as the 2011 treasurer. With no other nominations, the nomination was accepted.

IV. History of the HRC: 20 Years of Action

Rabbi Cohn provided a history of the first 10 years of the HRC. Cohn said when he came to New Orleans that he worked with then Mayor Sidney Barthelemy to reconstitute the HRC, and it was re-established in 1989. Cohn mentioned the HRC's work in 1992 when the commission held hearings to prevent the use of excessive force by members of the New Orleans Police Department. Cohn also mentioned the commission's work to move the racially divisive Liberty Monument to a less public place. The HRC conducted a meeting with members on both sides of the issue to make the monument movement possible. In 1994, the HRC helped identify the sources of malicious campaign practices during the Morial-Mintz mayoral race. In 1997, the HRC helped facilitate Gov. Foster's signing of Louisiana's hate crimes legislation. Cohn also credited Bagernis for his leadership over the years.

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Dr. Michael Cowan provided a history of the second 10 years of the HRC. Cowan said the HRC can do and has done three things in the past. First, the commission will receive complaints from the citizens about rights violations, although it will be a small portion of member engagement. Second, there may be an event or occurrence where the HRC has a unique role to play. Cowan then recounted the story of Levon Jones' death at a nightclub on Bourbon on New Years' Eve of 2004. The HRC held public hearings about his death. One by-product of the meetings was a training program for French Quarter bar and restaurant workers focusing on what they may or may not do in terms of customers of all racial demographics.

Cowan said the HRC's third purpose is to take the initiative to respond to crisis and make this city a more diverse and inclusive city for everyone. He then describes the "One New Orleans" campaign. Cowan also urged the group to continue to find new ways to improve and help New Orleans grow

V. Review of the Docket

Badon gave an overview of several different cases that the HRC heard over the years. The cases included sexual harassment claims, religious discrimination, sexual orientation discrimination and even potential discrimination based on a person's dress or hairstyle.

VI. Remarks

HRC members agreed to set the meeting time for 2011 for the second Thursday of each month at 4:30 p.m. The commission will NOT meet during the month of August.

Bagernis also informed the board that Russ Carll resigned from the commission due to his recent appointment to the French Quarter Commission.

VII. Meeting adjourned at 12:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Joe Halm, Secretary