

M I N U T E S
MICHIGAN CITY
COMMISSION ON THE SOCIAL STATUS OF
AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES

Wednesday, July 8, 2009

Commissioners Present:

Marty Corley
Charles Dowdell
Joan Ganschow
Sherry Neal
Arthur Payne, Jr.
James Stemmler

Commissioners Absent:

Albertine Allen
Michael Lark, Sr.
Willie Milsap
Richard Murphy
Rodney Washington

Others Present:

Andy Steele ALCo T.V. Cameraman
Gerry Jones Stepping Stone, H.O.P.E. Program

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairperson Payne called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL:

Secretary Neal called the roll and it was noted for the record. All attendance is noted above.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chairperson Payne asked for a motion of acceptance for the June 2009 meeting minutes. Commissioner Stemmler motioned to accept. Commissioner Corley seconded the motion. The chairperson asked for a vote:

Ayes: 06 Nays: 0 Absent: 05 Vacant: 01
Motioned carried.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

No report.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Executive Committee:

No report.

Neighborhood and Social Factors:

No report.

Criminal Justice and Corrections:

No report.

Education:

No report

Employment and Workforce:

Commissioner Stemmler reported that plans are in the works for a meeting with Congressman Joe Donnelly regarding the minority issues in the community.

Health and Addiction:

No report.

Awareness and Public Policy:

No report.

Finance Committee:

No report.

OLD BUSINESS:**H.O.P.E. Vacancy**

The H.O.P.E. seat that is currently held by Michael Lark, Sr. whose term will expire on July 22, 2009 will be temporarily filled by Gerry Jones, Executive Director of Stepping Stone and the President of the H.O.P.E. Board. Ms. Jones will fill in until a new Program Director has been hired for the H.O.P.E. Program who will then fill the vacancy.

Adult Probation/Criminal Justice System Vacancy

Secretary Neal reported that she has made contact with the Adult Probation Department to inquire if there is any one from the department who would like to serve on the Social Status Commission board to fill the vacancy left by Curtis Jackson. She added that inquiries will be sent to Mr. Robert Schuster – Chief Probation Officer. Included in the packet is the information needed in order to submit a letter of interest to the Michigan City Common Council. The packet is to be forwarded to the Adult Probation Department in LaPorte, IN.

Juneteenth Celebration

The Commission discussed the highlights of this year's Juneteenth Celebration. Some of the comments were that due to the absence of the event that with each year the attendance will grow as planning becomes more detailed. In other remarks it was mentioned that the Juneteenth Celebration would be more successful having a 2 day event if there were more activities to cover both days. The general consensus of the Commission was that the Juneteenth Celebration was a success in light of the fact that it has been a long time since the last event.

NEW BUSINESS:

Gerry Jones discussed current projects that the H.O.P.E. Program is currently involved with including the After School Program beginning in August, the 21st Century Program and the Safe Harbor Program. She also discussed some of the organizations' expectations for today and the future.

Ms. Jones also briefly discussed what is current with the Stepping Stone Program. Ms. Jones stated that she may be reached at (219) 879-4615 or (219) 871-6895 for questions or concerns.

Chairperson Payne distributed hand-outs that were received from Mr. Bennie Muhammad, Executive Director of the Gary Commission on the Social Status of Black Males. Information in the hand outs included an article from the courier-journal.com titled "States Vary In Approaches to Sealing Records" which discusses, in part, Indiana's strict requirements making expungement all but nonexistent in the state and "The Black Star Project" which involves several hundred cities to date who have signed up for the Million Father March 2009.

Soul Steppers will be participating in the Drill Team Competition on July 25th, 2009 at the Michigan City High School. The program will start around 4 p.m. Tickets for the Soul Steppers competition can be purchased for ten dollars (\$10). In additional comments about last year's event was so successful that it outgrew the previous location.

Comments from Gerry Jones commended Ms. Isbell for the work that she has done with Soul Steppers. She also stated that the children that participate in the Soul Steppers program are structured and conditioned which shows the dedication that Ms. Isbell has put into helping the youth. The group has also been invited back to New York to compete in November.

Commissioner Corley also discussed summertime and African American Males and their behavior toward law enforcement as the summer season has a notable increase in delinquent behavior. He also noted the MCPD is stepping up

police presence/patrols in the community. In addition he added that robberies and break-ins are on the rise. Also the MCPD has begun enforcing the city curfew. Commissioner Corley stated the city ordinance states that children under the age of 18 must be in the house by 10 p.m. although the state law indicates the curfew is 11 p.m. on weeknights and 12 midnight for the city and 1 a.m. for the state on the weekends.

Commissioner Corley reported that they are working with parents, guardians, custodians and schools to make sure that the effort is uniform as all are needed in order for the curfew enforcement to be successful. He stated as well that creating a collaborative and united front will offer more opportunities to address issues with the youth before they get out of hand. In further discussion the commission discussed what is needed to remove the self-destructive barriers in order to reach the teachable side of a troubled youth.

Further comments included a necessary part of successful mentoring is maintaining the relationship with the child by utilizing community resources such as the Corner to Cornerstone Mentoring Program. It is also noted that the Commission believes that there needs to be more local resources for troubled youth to receive help.

One area of concern is the lapse in mentoring that occurs when school is out for the summer. MCAS does not endorse mentoring after regular school hours or when school is out for the spring, winter and summer break(s). This lapse in contact creates problems for mentors who find it difficult to locate the children when school is not in session.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

N/A

ADJOURNMENT:

Chairperson Payne asked for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Stemmler motioned to accept. Commissioner Corley seconded the motion.

Ayes: 08

Nays: 0

Absent: 04

Vacant: 01

Motioned carried.

Chairperson Payne called the meeting adjourned 1:00 p.m.

***** The next Michigan City Commission on the Social Status of the African American Males is scheduled for Wednesday, August 12th, 2009, 12:00 noon at City Hall in the Mayor's Conference room.***