

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF MEN
<http://www.nh.gov/csm>
Minutes for the Twenty-Third Commission Meeting
January 27, 2006 1-4 PM
Legislative Office Building Room 206, Concord, NH

These minutes were taken by Scott Garman.

Members Present: Joe Mastromarino, Gus Lerandeau, Marshall Hickok, Michael Geanoulis, Scott Garman.

Members Absent: Stephen Gorin.

Secretary's Report:

Gus Lerandeau motioned to accept the November 2005 minutes as amended. Mike Geanoulis seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

First Biennial Report Feedback:

Joe Mastromarino mentioned that he has received several inquiries about the report from the media and public. Several groups in other states are interested in creating a similar Commission and are looking for advice. Gus Lerandeau suggested that we should be careful to make official responses to these inquiries without the full consent of the Commission.

Mike Geanoulis pointed out that many times inquiries, especially those coming from the media, have tight deadlines and need immediate action, and that it is to our advantage to bring media exposure to these issues. Marshall Hickok questioned the need for media exposure in light of recent events.

Marshall commented on recent Associated Press and New Hampshire Public Radio coverage on the First Biennial Report of the Commission on the Status of Men. He cited as an example an AP article that stated: "A commission that believes courts and schools must do more to help men and boys says its first priority is getting more financial support for its work." (AP Dec. 27, 2005). He stated that WEVO similarly reported only the fact that the Commission sought funding and mentioned nothing further about the Commission's goal's and mandate. Marshall further expressed his concern that the Commission's valuable message, a message that recently gained national recognition as a cover story on Newsweek, had been obscured in the press by the primacy in the Report (the mention of the need for funding) appearing as the first and last bulleted items in the report. He commented that all Commission members knew their position was a voluntary one when they accepted their appointment and that funding should not have appeared as the report's priority.

Marshall then motioned that the recommendations for funding be deleted from the report which was unanimously adopted.

Marshall further acknowledged that while the passion of some Commission members for family,

custody, visitation, and domestic violence issues was a driving force behind the report, such views were also obscuring in the press the larger mission of the Commission and that perhaps such focused interests would better be harnessed on a committee.

Joe noted that he has read multiple articles on the Commission's report and felt that most of them were quite positive, and covered many of the issues which Marshall acknowledged were legitimate and related to the Newsweek story. He also noted that the purpose of having a 7-member Commission was so that people with different perspectives and areas of interest could contribute their input to the report. Given that it was his responsibility as Chair to deliver the report by its deadline, he accomplished the best he could given the resources he had at the time. He also pointed out that there were no contributions to the report from anyone on the Commission that were rejected. Joe felt that overall, publicity on the Commission's work was helpful to our cause and that it cannot be expected that all publicity will be exactly the way we want it to be. He also stated his belief that the work of the Commission would be improved by the addition of funding to hire help with our research efforts.

Marshall responded by reading the first recommendation on the report requesting funding, and asked if the Chair had placed that at the top of the list. Joe and Scott Garman explained that the ordering of recommendations was not intended to imply any importance or priority, and that they followed the ordering of issues discussed in the full text of the report.

Scott Garman then expressed his view that it is not the fault of the Commission that the Associated Press article in question chose to ignore the tens of pages of material on other issues in the report and focus only on mentioning the funding recommendation. He noted that a couple of NH newspapers reprinted that AP article, and that Mike Geanoulis immediately wrote a reply taking issue with that portrayal of the report, which was printed in at least one newspaper. He also noted that a majority of the articles printed about the Commission's report did cover one or more of our statutory responsibilities and sent an important message both locally and nationally about our efforts, which are inspiring others in positive ways.

Mike Geanoulis apologized for listing the funding recommendation first and did not intend for it to be interpreted as our top priority. He offered to motion that the Commission report be modified to remove the first recommendation regarding funding, to avoid further misunderstandings stemming from the ordering of the list. The final recommendation would still remain intact. The motion was not formally made due to further discussions.

Mike also noted that since July 2005, a public wiki web site had been available for Commissioners to contribute content to that could appear in the biennial report. He then questioned Marshall's criticism of the report's publicity in hindsight when efforts could have been made months ago to ensure this did not happen.

Marshall responded by stating that he has not lost the right to try to amend the report and correct the error that has occurred. He also stated that he was unaware of the wiki site. Joe and Mike reiterated that this effort had been ongoing since the early summer.

Marshall then motioned to remove the first bulleted item in the report's recommendations list. Gus Lerandeau seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

Scott Garman will update the report and re-post it to the CSM web site.

Mike Geanoulis and Scott Garman reported being contacted by John Maguire, publisher of The Liberator magazine, who requested a copy of the report and permission to include excerpts of it in the magazine. Scott sent him a copy of the report and informed him of his right to reprint and redistribute the report as requested.

Joe returned to the topic of responding to public inquiries. On the topic of how to establish similar Commissions in other states, Joe is going to refer people to Rep. David Bickford, who was the primary sponsor of the legislation which established this Commission. Joe also suggested that responses to inquiries (other than basic information questions such as meeting times, web site address, etc.) will come from the Chair or the Chair's designation. Marshall also suggested coming up with a set of prepared statements for recommending resources in our various research areas.

Informational Flyer and Brochure:

The Commission looked over a flyer and brochure design being offered by Lee Newman to help raise awareness about the existence and purpose of the Commission. The cost of the designs would be \$20 for the color flyer and \$30 for the tri-fold color brochure. Since these items have been reviewed for the past several meetings so final discussions were had on minor changes to the wording within the designs, which Lee agreed to make. Changes included:

Tri-fold Brochure: "Men in New Hampshire should take the time to find out why this Commission is so important." -> "Men and women in New Hampshire..."

Scott Garman motioned to spend \$50 from our treasury to Lee Newman for the rights and source documents for the flyer and brochure. Mike Geanoulis seconded, and the motion passed 4-1, with Marshall Hickok opposed.

Mike Geanoulis made a motion to post the flyer and brochure as amended on the Commission's web site. Scott Garman seconded, and the motion passed 3-2, with Marshall Hickok and Gus Lerandau opposed.

Reimbursement for Biennial Report Printing Expenses:

In the past month, Mike Geanoulis spent \$253.00 for 110 copies of the report, and he will ask NCFC-NH to follow through on its matching contribution offer of \$126.50.

Scott Garman motioned that a bill for \$253.00 be submitted through the required state channel to reimburse Mike for his expenses. Marshall Hickok seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

NH Children's Alliance Membership:

During the last meeting we had placed on the agenda to discuss joining the NH CAN. This membership

does not cost anything. Mike Geanoulis motioned that the Commission become a member organization of the NH Children's Alliance. Scott Garman seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

Joe Mastromarino will ask Stephen Gorin if he'd like to serve as the Commission's liaison with NH CAN.

Web Site Update:

Scott Garman reported adding a link to www.menteach.org to the CSM resources page as was approved during the last meeting, but no other changes were made other than additions of approved meeting minutes and calendar changes.

Marshall Hickok expressed interest in reprinting the text of the Newsweek article on our web site, but there were concerns about getting legal permission to reprint the article. Marshall agreed to investigate this and possibly request permission to reprint the article, and get back to us at the next meeting with his findings.

RADAR:

Mike Geanoulis wanted everyone to be aware that PBS' "Breaking the Silence" program wrongfully portrayed fathers who seek custody of their children as being abusive and that the ombudsman of both PBS and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting wrote opinions condemning the program as one-sided and unfair. PBS promised to redress this grievance by producing another program with a critical eye for the truth from both sides of this argument. More information about this controversy can be obtained from www.mediadar.org.

Birth Certificates:

Mike Geanoulis handed out folders containing copies of the Birth Certificate laws under RSA 5-C. He suggested that everyone study the laws to determine the extent to which this Commission might want to recommend changes for the purpose of pursuing our duty to "bring fathers and children closer together." Under present law, it is possible for the father to be left unnamed on the child's birth certificate.

Meeting Agendas:

Gus Lerandeau suggested that to address our agenda items more effectively, that we should look into forming committees to research the topic and report on results monthly. Everyone agreed to consider which committee they would like to form or serve on for the next meeting.

Scott Garman will be working with Joe and Mike to compile the agenda for upcoming meetings so that it can be distributed a few days to a week before the next meeting.

Commissioners heard testimony from the public and adjourned at 4 PM.