

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF MEN
MINUTES FOR THE SIXTEENTH COMMISSION MEETING
March 30, 2005 1-4 PM
Legislative Office Building Room 206, Concord

Members Present: Joseph Mastromarino, Scott Garman, Michael Geanoulis, Stephen Gorin, Gus Lerandeau.

Members Absent: Larry Colby, Marshall Hickok.

Also present: Rep. David Bickford, Paul Clements, Lee Newman.

These minutes were taken by Scott Garman.

Chair Joe Mastromarino called the meeting to order shortly after 1 PM and began with Commissioner introductions.

Secretary's Report: Minutes from the February meeting were in final draft form but not all Commissioners had the most recent copy from Larry Colby. They will be approved at the next meeting.

Treasurer's Report: Larry Colby did not make it to this meeting and so the Treasurer's Report is deferred until the next meeting.

Commission Communications: Members of the Commission received an e-mail from Doug Wells regarding the problem of male-bashing at the University of New Hampshire. Mr. Wells directed the Commission to read recent news articles regarding an event held at UNH called the "Patriarchy Slam", a poetry slam event run by a group called the Feminist Action League. This event would be discussed further during the meeting.

Legislation:

Rep. David Bickford gave an overview of recent legislative activity of interest to the Commission:

HB450 passed the Child and Family Law Committee in February with a vote of 14 to 3 OTP. HB450 will extend the Child Support Study Commission and appropriate funds to hire economists to create cost-based child support models for New Hampshire. These models can then be used to recommend changes to the NH Child Support Guidelines via new legislation.

HB640, relative to parental rights and responsibilities, was unanimously voted OTP (Ought To Pass) by the Child and Family Law Committee. This bill replaces the term custody with the

phrase “parental rights and responsibilities,” and states that continuing and frequent contact with both parents is in the best interests of the child.

HB529, establishing a rebuttable presumption in favor of shared parental rights and responsibilities, has been retained for further study and probably won't be acted upon until late this fall (November). This bill is one of the most important with regard to father involvement, as it would establish a presumption of equal parenting as being in the best interests of the child. Clear and convincing evidence would be required to deviate from that standard. Public turnout for this bill was huge, with over eighty people attending the public hearing and an overwhelming majority supporting it.

HB508, relative to ex-parte hearings, was retained for further study and will likely have legislative work sessions late this summer. This bill states that no ex-parte hearing shall be held when a party's civil rights or civil liberties are at stake, unless all possible attempts have been made to notify the party of the hearing.

UNH Male Bashing:

Scott Garman passed out two articles about the Feminist Action League (FAL) group on the UNH/Durham campus and their recent “Patriarchy Slam” event. Discussion ensued on whether the Commission should write a letter to the FAL and/or UNH administration regarding how this impacts the status of men in education. Stephen Gorin expressed some concerns that the news articles may have taken the event out of context or that the individuals quoted may not represent the views of the University.

News articles from both UNH's school newspaper, *The New Hampshire*, and *The Union Leader* both quoted an individual at the Patriarchy Slam event who stated “Ever since I learned to embrace my feminist nature, I found great joy in threatening men's lives. Because I see them for what they are: misogynistic, sexist, oppressive and absurdly pathetic beings who only serve to pollute and contaminate this world.” They also mentioned that a male student reporter was forced to leave the event. Paul Clements pointed out that the limits of free speech were exceeded when the student began making statements about threatening men's lives. Scott Garman has been keeping track of activities at UNH and does not believe this was an isolated event, but one that lies on a continuum of increasing anti-male attitudes being expressed at UNH by members of the FAL and its supporters.

Scott Garman made a motion to draft a letter to the UNH administration for approval by the group. Michael Geanoulis seconded it, and the motion passed. The letter will be approved by e-mail and then sent to the University.

Domestic Violence:

The Domestic Violence Fatality Review Committee is due to issue another report this year.

Michael Geanoulis suggested that the Commission should contact them and urge them to include statistical information about both male and female victims. Previous reports by the DVFR Committee have included numerous statistics about female victims but without corresponding numbers for male victims; this missing data could play a critical role in understanding the problem of domestic violence and the formulation of policies aimed to prevent domestic violence fatalities. Mike agreed to write a draft letter to the Committee for approval by the Commission; this process would be done over e-mail.

Lee Newman introduced himself and distributed a new pamphlet that SAFE-NH has issued about stalking, to aid individuals in obtaining restraining orders for stalking. He also distributed a page of information written by Mark Rosenthal that debunks the myth that as many women were killed by their intimate partners during the Vietnam War as men were killed in the war (58,000).

Michael Geanoulis explained the purpose of RADAR – Respecting Accuracy in Domestic Abuse Reporting, which is a watchdog effort to hold the media accountable for accurately reporting information about domestic violence, particularly with regard to under-served victims. Mike requested that Scott Garman add a link to RADAR on the Commission's web site.

In early June, the 11th Annual Domestic Violence Conference will be held at the Mount Washington Hotel. This event is co-sponsored by the NH Attorney General's office and the Governor's Commission Against Sexual and Domestic Violence. Joe Mastromarino agreed to find out about sending a Commission member to the event and whether the Commission could sponsor non-members of the Commission to attend.

NH Suicide Research:

Joe Mastromarino gave an update on the suicide report. Nothing new has happened although a new data set is due to be released from the medical examiner's office within the next couple of weeks. The people working on this project may be attending a future CSM meeting.

Task Force on Family Law Minutes:

Michael Geanoulis wanted to make everyone aware that the Task Force on Family Law attitudes about shared parenting, or joint custody, could have been improperly influenced by certain "untruths" that were told early on and persisted for many months; that it took an extended period of time to get those "untruths" exposed as a blatant and deliberate falsehood designed to wrongfully influence the TFFL; that it took a series of redraft requests of the October 2004 minutes to accurately reflect the events surrounding those misleading falsehoods; that even after the redrafts, the complete accuracy of an account of those improprieties is barely discernible. In any event, the TFFL report, possibly tainted with inaccurate influences, was in its final stages.

The Untruths? That "California (and later Wisconsin) had repealed its joint custody laws as being unworkable". The source of those fibs was Amanda Grady of the Coalition Against Sexual

and Domestic Abuse and (TFFL member).

Geanoulis feels that his motion to recommend that "Children's time with parents should be maximized" (as advised by Dr Peggy Ward) was rejected because of the above described false testimony about the alleged "failure" of joint physical custody in California and Wisconsin.

The October 29 TFFL minutes twice reflects the fact that a minority position should not be allowed, and that the report will make no mention of the issue of joint physical custody.

Mike Geanoulis feels he was improperly denied a minority expression; that certain critical information about domestic violence submitted by Dr. Murray Straus of UNH should have been included in the report; and that certain supportive testimony about shared parenting, especially that of Attorney Ron Henry of the Children's Rights Council, should also have been included.

Advisory Groups:

Michael Geanoulis motioned to commence the creation of an Advisory Group to allow participation by members of the public. The motion was seconded by Scott Garman and unanimously approved. Mike will be contacting David Bickford, Lee Newman, and Paul Clements, Robert Chase, Jeff Oigny, Marc Snider, and possibly others for inclusion in these Advisory Groups.

Before closing the meeting, Joe opened the meeting for public comments.