

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF MEN

<http://www.nh.gov/csm>

Minutes for the Twenty-Sixth Commission Meeting

April 28, 2006 1-4 PM

Legislative Office Building Room 206, Concord, NH

These minutes were taken by Scott Garman.

Members Present: Joe Mastromarino, Scott Garman, Michael Geanoulis, Marshall Hickok, David Lauren.

Members Absent: Stephen Gorin, Gus Lerandau.

Secretary's Report:

Scott Garman distributed draft copies of the March meeting minutes along with a transcript draft of the testimony of DHHS Commissioner John Stephen.

David Lauren moved to have the transcript draft sent to Commissioner John Stephen and Grace Mattern to give them an opportunity to provide corrections or clarifications if needed. Mike Geanoulis seconded. Mike Geanoulis suggested that this be handled via e-mail and about 5-10 days be given as the input period so that the transcript can be finalized for posting in a timely manner, and this was agreeable to all present. Scott agreed to make the input period ten business days. The motion then passed unanimously.

David Lauren asked to reopen an issue with the February meeting minutes. David objected to the inclusion of substituted text from the January meeting minutes, which was included in the February meeting minutes. He felt that when text is substituted, that the original text should not appear in any instance of the meeting minutes, due to the confusion it may cause. Marshall Hickok agreed.

Scott Garman acknowledged this problem but explained that the purpose of including the substituted text was to make the public aware of the state of the minutes before and after the substitution, and that he did so in the spirit of openness. Joe Mastromarino requested that Scott remove this substituted text from the already-released February minutes, and in the future, that substitution amendments only include the final version of the text in the published minutes. Scott agreed to do this and to get the web site updated with the February minutes change as quickly as possible.

Joe Mastromarino moved to approve the March meeting minutes as presented. Mike Geanoulis seconded, and the motion was approved 3-0 (Marshall Hickok and David Lauren abstained due to being absent at the last meeting).

Joe Mastromarino also distributed copies of a letter he sent to DHHS Commissioner John Stephen thanking him for his testimony at the last meeting and requesting more information on fatherlessness in NH, including:

- * Percent of birth certificates where the father is not named.
- * Percent of birth certificates in which the surname of the child does not match that of the father.
- * Percent of households in which the biological father does not live.

A complete copy of this letter can be found in **Appendix A** of these minutes.

Web Site Update:

Scott Garman reported that no new links were added to the CSM web site last month other than the typical minutes and meeting calendar updates.

Marshall Hickok reported that obtaining reprinting rights for the Newsweek article "The Trouble with Boys" was not feasible for us, as it would cost more than five thousand dollars. Instead, we will keep the HTML link on our web site and reference the Newsweek issue that it originated from (January 30, 2006). That way members of the public can at least go to their local library to find the article once the link expires.

RADAR:

Mike Geanoulis gave an update on RADAR - Respecting Accuracy in Domestic Abuse Reporting (<http://www.mediaradar.org>). Mike explained that RADAR has been a rare and unique voice in helping to raise awareness about biases against men when it comes to domestic violence. Their most recent special report was titled, "VAWA: Threat to Families, Children, Men, and Women." (<http://www.mediaradar.org/docs/VAWA-Threat-to-Families.pdf>) and this report was distributed to the Commissioners. Mike suggested that the Commission on the Status of Men sign-on as supporting the mission of RADAR. Currently 27 other organizations have signed on.

David Lauren asked that a vote on endorsing RADAR be delayed until he had the opportunity to review these materials further. Upon an immediate initial review of the RADAR special report, he objected to RADAR's assertion that ex-parte domestic violence restraining order cases are routinely approved, based on his personal experience as a prosecutor. He also believes that the Commission on the Status of Men should be representing the interests of all men in NH, and that he knows many men who would not agree with RADAR's views, including himself. David does not believe that RADAR's reports are impartial, particularly on VAWA. He believes that if individual members of the CSM wish to register as RADAR's supporters, he would have no objections, but not on behalf of the CSM.

Joe Mastromarino stated that the CSM does not exist to represent the opinions of men in NH. He pointed out that the statutory responsibility of the Commission is to promote initiatives related to our mission to improve men's status. Joe also stated that he does believe that domestic violence

restraining orders are granted routinely.

Marshall Hickok suggested that the Commission might be more effective by collecting data and testimony on these issues, rather than aligning ourselves with a third party organization which has a declared agenda. He favors this more hands-on approach.

Mike Geanoulis agreed that taking a more pro-active approach on these issues would be best, but felt a strong need to acknowledge that groups like RADAR can be more effective because of their focus on these issues. Mike also feels that the NH Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence and many of the commonly accepted facts about domestic violence are extremely biased. He cited an example of this in the Governor's Domestic Violence Fatality Review Committee, which reported many statistics on female victims of domestic violence without citing corresponding statistics on male victims. Mike pointed out a study furnished by the Administrative Office of the Courts which found that the vast majority of ex-parte petitions for restraining orders are granted. This study found that in Littleton and Nashua, the percentage of temporary restraining orders granted was 100% and 98%, respectively. He further disagreed that a vote should be held off on until more Commissioners are present, because these issues are urgent and deserve prompt action.

David Lauren responded by reiterating his request that all Commissioners, including those not present, be given an opportunity to closely review RADAR's materials before taking a vote to sign on to RADAR.

Marshall Hickok moved to table voting on RADAR until the next meeting so that other Commissioners may review RADAR's materials. David Lauren seconded. The motion passed 4-1, with Mike Geanoulis opposed.

Lee Newman agreed to e-mail materials about RADAR to all of the Commissioners.

Legislative Report:

Mike Geanoulis reported that HB1580, the per-diem child support bill, passed the Senate Ways and Means Committee, but was amended to not become effective until 2008. HB529, the shared parenting bill, was amended by Senator Foster to read comparable parenting "where appropriate" and remove the requirement for judges to explain their reasons when comparable parenting is denied, which fundamentally guts the bill.

Treasury Issues:

Joe Mastromarino reported that in the past month he sought to withdraw funds from our treasury to cover printing costs of the first biennial report. Joe was told that only our 090 account could be used for withdrawals. We currently have \$840 in our Class 070 account, and \$160 in our Class 090 account, and we need to transfer funds from the 070 account to the 090 account in order to make use of them. Joe had a signed form filled out to perform this transfer, and provided it to

David Lauren. David will follow-through on this with Barry Bodell, and also investigate any other treasury account issues that we may need to become aware of.

HB1331 (TANF) 2006:

Mike Geanoulis presented copies of HB1331 to the Commission and prompted a discussion on the bill's impact on fathers and families.

Members agreed that the text of HB1331 may have a negative impact on the father/child relationship and would inappropriately modify RSA 167:79 II to include only the parent who has custody the majority of the time. The clause excludes parents, usually the father, who may have 40% or 45% parenting time, and who would otherwise also qualify for TANF funds. With the trend toward shared parenting, it was felt that both parents who may qualify should be considered in all TANF cases, regardless of parenting time schedules. Mike Geanoulis further pointed out the singular use of the word "parent" throughout the bill and felt the word should have the plural form - "parents" - in family-related bills.

Education Committee Status Report:

Scott Garman provided a brief summary from the CSM Education Committee. He distributed copies of an article in the February 2006 issue of "Trend Lines NH" by Polecon Research (<http://capwiz.com/childrennh/utr/1/EXAZFOAENX/NLNZFOARYJ/632441946>). This issue had a few articles of interest to those studying the high school dropout problem in NH, and included statistics on NH dropouts from several sources, as well as accompanying commentary on some of the economic reasons why young males make up the majority of dropouts.

Appendix A: Letter to DHHS Commissioner John Stephen

Dear Commissioner Stephen:

Thank you for appearing before our commission at our last meeting and for giving us some idea of how we might better accomplish our mission to relieve the problems of fatherlessness, elevated male suicide/mortality rates, and the inferior reading/comprehension scores of boys.

We are especially interested, with this request for help, in obtaining public support for our efforts to elevate the status of men and boys. But we need more data.

According to data we received from the Dept. of Vital Statistics, approximately 5% of all New Hampshire birth certificates do not name the father, and an additional 5% have the surname of the father different from that of the child's.

During the deliberations to create a Commission on the Status of Men (CSM), lawmakers charged that fatherless children were the largest users of state funded services, and they intended that a CSM might obtain some relief for the taxpayer by bringing fathers and children closer

together pursuant to RSA 19-I:4. With what we know about the wellness of fatherless children from the national data for such statistics as poverty, suicide and educational failure, we suspect that there is an overrepresentation of fatherless children in domains such as DCSS, TANF, and DCYF.

We therefore request quantifiable data on the fatherless condition in each of these domains as we discussed at our March meeting. We realize that such data may be difficult to obtain, but anything you might provide will help:

- (1) Percent of birth certificates in which the father is not named.
- (2) Percent of birth certificates in which surnames are different.
- (3) Percent of households in which the natural father does not live.

Any data that will help us determine the extent to which the natural father is not involved, as you see the need, will be very helpful.

Sincerely,

Joseph Mastromarino, Chair
Commission on the Status of Men

cc: Rep Bickford
NCFC-NH
M Bishop
J Williams