

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE  
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF MEN

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

UNOFFICIAL Minutes for the Thirty-Seventh Commission Meeting

July 27, 2007 1-4 PM

Legislative Office Building Room 2006, Concord, NH

**NOTE: Due to a lack of a quorum of members, these minutes are UNOFFICIAL.**

These minutes were taken by Scott Garman.

**Members Present:** Joe Mastromarino, Scott Garman, Mike Geanoulis.

**Members Absent:** Marshall Hickok, David Lauren, Gus Lerandean, Scott Meyer.

**Others Present:** David Bickford (New Durham).

Chair Joe Mastromarino opened the meeting with Commissioner introductions.

**New Commission Member:**

Joe Mastromarino noted that Scott Meyer from Plymouth State University has been appointed and confirmed to the Commission, and was unable to make today's meeting due to a prior commitment. Scott's office number is 603-535-2377 and his email address is [scottm@mail.plymouth.edu](mailto:scottm@mail.plymouth.edu). Scott Garman will confirm with him whether to use this email address for Commission business and update the Commission's web site.

**Secretary's Report:**

The June meeting minutes could not be approved due to the lack of a quorum.

Mike Geanoulis asked to have the following paragraph added to the minutes draft, after the mention of the \$50/month minimum child support payment:

*Mike Geanoulis expressed disagreement with the practice of compounding the problems of putative fathers who have little or no income by requiring a minimum child support payment during times of disablement such as unemployment or imprisonment. David Lauren did not oppose this practice, and explained that regardless of whether a mother or father is in prison, they are still parents, and still have a financial responsibility of supporting their child(ren).*

**WIC Nutrition Program:**

Mike Geanoulis wanted to make the public aware that the USDA Women-Infants-Children (WIC) program sends the wrong message to fathers. Mike feels that any USDA nutrition program should be inclusive of poor fathers as

well as poor mothers, and such inclusion should be given equal billing for both parents. Mike noted that by leaving out fathers in the name of this program, a message is sent that fathers don't matter as much as mothers. Joe Mastromarino agreed to send a letter to the USDA in an effort to redress this problem. A draft of this letter appears at the end of these minutes.

### **Warren Farrell Presentation:**

Scott Garman agreed to go forward with arrangements to have Warren Farrell present at the September 2007 meeting. For this to happen, the September meeting will need to be held on Thursday, September 27, instead of the usual last Friday of the month schedule. An attempt will be made to reserve both rooms 206 and 207 of the Legislative Office Building for this presentation.

### **Brainstorming the Financial Costs of Fatherlessness:**

Mike Geanoulis led a brainstorming session to explore the costs of fatherlessness to the taxpayer. Legislators were concerned about the possibility, when they enacted HB597 (Men's Commission), that children who have a poor or non-existent relationship with their father may be the highest users of state-funded services (see HB587-FN-A, Chapter 267:2, Laws of 2002, Effective July 1, 2002). Mike feels that this Commission needs to make a special effort to quantify such costs and to come up with a reasonable estimate on the cost-effectiveness of Commission efforts to bring fathers and children closer together. This effort is needed to justify Commission requests for funding during the next session.

Possible areas of information and financial impact of fatherlessness:

- DCYF, TANF and Juvenile Programs such as CHINS and the Youth Detention Center.
- Arrearages and compliance rates of court ordered support in the Division of Child Support Services.
- The New Futures program, a youth-oriented alcohol abuse treatment and prevention program.
- Prof. Kerry Kazura of the UNH Family Studies program and the UNH Family Extension Service.
- NH Dept of Education--to determine, if possible, the extent to which educational failure is linked to father absence, and to implement programs to encourage a meaningful father/child connection where appropriate.
- Examining the state budget via the nh.gov web site and prioritizing programs by the amount of money spent on them along with an estimate on the extent to which the need for such programs might be ameliorated by higher rates of meaningful father involvement.

### **Draft of USDA WIC Program Letter:**

1 August 2007

Mike Johanns  
Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Johanns:

The Commission recently was asked about equity issues with the WIC (Women Infants & Children) nutrition program as administered by your Food and Nutrition Service. We subsequently reviewed and discussed these issues at our most recent meeting. As a result of that review, we are respectfully suggesting some fairly inexpensive but crucially important modifications in the way that this valuable program is presented to the public.

We note that while the program is available to poor fathers who have nutritional needs for their children as well as poor mothers, and that by law the program must be gender-neutral, that fact is not immediately obvious. Your publication describing the program feature women on the cover pages and introductory information, implying that this is a program for and about women and their children, and one must delve into it in greater detail to discover that poor fathers may qualify as well.

We believe, as we are sure that you do, that any program designed to improve family wellness should encourage parental involvement on an equal basis. To do otherwise sends inappropriate messages about family responsibilities and the core needs of children.

We thus ask that you consider:

1. Changing the WIC program name to PIC (Parents Infants and Children).
2. Changing the wording of PIC's mission statement to include "parents, infants and children..."
3. Modifying photographs, brochures, publications, websites in such a way as to portray both mothers and fathers on an equal basis.
4. Any other changes you deem appropriate to acknowledge the greater role that fathers play in the healthy development of their children, that publicize the gender-neutral administration of your programs, and that encourage (in text and photographs) the equal responsibility of both fathers and mothers in fostering a healthy environment for their children.

Sincerely,

Joseph H. Mastromarino, MD, Chair  
New Hampshire Commission on the Status of Men  
PO Box 654  
Hampton, NH 03843

cc: John Salazar, F&NS Administrator  
Food and Nutrition Service  
3101 Park Center Drive  
Alexandria, VA 22302  
John Stephen, NH H&HS Commissioner  
Mike Geanoulis, Chair, CSM Father/Child Connection