

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF MEN

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

Minutes for the Twentieth Commission Meeting

August 31, 2005 1-4 PM

Legislative Office Building Room 307, Concord, NH

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

Members Absent: Larry Colby [resignation pending].

Others Present: Rep. David Bickford

These minutes were taken by Scott Garman.

Thom Linehan Testimony:

Mr. Linehan is an Extension Educator for the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension program. His focus is on family and community issues in Merrimack County. As he works directly with parents and social services that deal with family issues, Mr. Linehan tries to emphasize the importance of both parents in children's lives. A number of educational resources that UNH Cooperative Extension distributes (which can be found at <http://www.extension.unh.edu/Family/Family.htm>) include facts on the importance of fathers. Mr. Linehan also works with programs such as Head Start and the numerous family support centers throughout the state to develop programs and activities that include fathers.

Mr. Linehan has taught classes on parenting specifically for dads, as well as classes that involve both parents, and some which are for separating or divorcing parents. Many of these parenting courses qualify as parenting education classes that family courts refer people to take.

Rep. David Bickford asked Mr. Linehan if Cooperative Extension might find it in the scope of their work to begin formally educating the family court system about parenting issues. Mr. Linehan responded that they are in the process of looking for additional outreach activities and that this avenue is being considered. The parenting education classes that the courts can require parents to take are not standardized and this is another area that Cooperative Extension is investigating as a project to undertake.

Network NH is a coalition of family resource and support programs. Their web site can be found at: <http://familysupportnh.org>.

Marshall Hickok asked Mr. Linehan if he is aware of any specific issues that are preventing capable fathers from being involved with their children, especially after divorce or separation.

Mr. Linehan referred the Commission to Dr. Emily Douglas, who also works in the Cooperative Extension, and is very familiar with research in that area. He did mention from personal experience that he sees a number of fathers in his parenting classes that struggle to stay involved in their children's lives, and that a lower percentage of fathers have primary physical custody of their children. Mr. Linehan also feels that culturally, the stereotype of men as providers/wallets can be very restrictive, and that society often confuses caring with providing.

Mike Geanoulis asked Mr. Linehan if Cooperative Extension still runs a program to help incarcerated fathers stay involved with their children. Mr. Linehan confirmed this. Mike pointed out that a many fathers in the state who are not even incarcerated are also having problems staying involved with their children.

Mr. Linehan also commented on issues regarding homeless men, specifically that single homeless men have a harder time finding a bed in homeless shelters, because shelters are focused on providing help to families first.

Gus Lerandau motioned to ask the Chair to extend a formal invitation to Dr. Emily Douglas to be a guest speaker at a future meeting. Mike Geanoulis seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved. Rep. Bickford will forward Emily Douglas' contact information to Joe Mastromarino.

Steve Gorin mentioned that he is in contact with Louis Josephson, of the Riverbend Community Mental Health organization, and that he might be a good speaker to invite to a future meeting. No action was taken on the suggestion at this time.

NH Children's Alliance Network (NH CAN):

Steve Gorin spoke with Steve Varnum of the NH Children's Alliance regarding the rejection of some of Mike Geanoulis' submissions to their web site Reading Room. In particular, Steve Varnum had no major objections to the Lancet article that Mike had submitted earlier this summer, and he was not involved in the Reading Room decision. Because Mr. Varnum expressed a willingness to attend a future CSM meeting, Joe agreed to have Steve Gorin invite Mr. Varnum to be a guest speaker at a future meeting (November or later).

Secretary's Report:

Gus Lerandau motioned to accept the July meeting minutes without changes. Mike Geanoulis seconded, and the minutes were unanimously approved.

Treasurer's report:

Joe Mastromarino has made attempts to contact Larry Colby by telephone, with no response. He will continue to try to get in touch with Larry to obtain his letter of resignation and all paperwork related to the CSM treasury.

Suicide Prevention Fundraising Walk:

Scott Garman announced that the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention will be holding a fundraising walk in Portsmouth, NH on September 24, 2005. AFSP provides educational and support resources to help prevent suicide. For more information, see the AFSP web site at <http://www.afsp.org>. Look for the Portsmouth, NH "Out of the Darkness" community walk. Matt Curtin is involved in organizing this event in Portsmouth and can be contacted at: mattyhifi@comcast.net.

Informational Flyers:

We decided to table discussion of the informational flyers that Lee Newman submitted last month since we did not have any printouts of them and Lee was not present at the meeting.

Web Site:

Scott Garman reported that no changes to the web site have been made other than posting June's meeting minutes and updating the meeting calendar page.

Final Report:

Scott Garman distributed an updated version of the wiki web page with resources and information that the CSM may wish to include in our final report. Mike Geanoulis added a lot of information about the status on fathers and the Task Force on Family Law, Scott added some more educational resources, and a member of the public added a link to the web site www.menteach.org, which is a group that encourages men to become adolescent educators. This wiki page can be found at: http://wiki.mensactivism.org:3333/wiki/index.php/NH_CSM_First_Biennial_Report

Ann Larney Testimony:

Ann Larney is a representative from the Attorney General's office who came to this meeting at the request of Marshall Hickok on behalf of the Commission to answer procedural and other questions.

The CSM is free to adopt its own its own rules and procedures.

According to RSA 21:15, the majority present (of a quorum) has authority to vote (including the Chair) unless otherwise stated.

Cooperation clause: The CSM should not encounter any problems obtaining public information related to its mission from state agencies or organizations. Requests for information cannot be broad or unreasonable. For example, a state agency would not be obliged to re-analyze data it

had taken at the request of the CSM. Requests cannot intrude into the other agencies' ability to conduct their own business. If a state agency is known to have easy access to some information that the CSM requests, and they do not provide that information in a reasonable amount of time, the CSM can approach the Attorney General's office for assistance. Information requests from the CSM should be considered higher priority than requests from individual citizens, since the CSM is a part of state government, but the CSM is not entitled to privileged confidential information (e.g, medical information, social security numbers, home addresses, etc).

Right to Know Law: The RTK Memo is a very readable overview of the RTK laws and is recommended for review. Recent changes to the RTK laws have made notes or materials for personal use or which do not have an official purpose made prior to, during, or after public proceedings exempt from RTK. Preliminary drafts of reports and related notes not in their final form are also exempt if they have not been disclosed or distributed to a quorum of members. Group business cannot be done by e-mail. Under certain circumstances, discussions with a quorum of members that do not involve motions or votes can be done if the contents of those discussions are made public. Creating agendas is considered an administrative action and is not subject to the RTK law. It is permissible for agendas to be set anytime prior to the beginning of the meeting. Meeting announcements require two postings. Generally, this is done by sending meeting notices to the legislative office press room and web site. The LOB notice also counts as a meeting notice.

The CSM currently does not have positions for Secretary, Vice Chair, and soon, Treasurer that were approved by the Governor and Executive Council. Since our statute requires this, we should write a letter to the Executive Council citing the statute and requesting that these positions be assigned to members.

Use of the NH state seal: The state seal and letterhead can be used by the Commission after obtaining permission from the Secretary of State's office. There is an application form to do this. See RSA 3:9-a for details.

The CSM is administratively "attached" to AD services, which should be sufficient authority to be able to schedule a meeting room. However, since we do not have appropriations, we do not have a budget number.

A commission with a treasury of more than \$100 needs to speak with the Treasurer's office to establish a deposit procedure for having an account. Joe Bouchard in AD services would be a good person to talk with about this. The commission can solicit donations and apply for grants.

E-mail: ann.larney@doj.nh.gov

Other Issues:

Mike Geanoulis briefly brought up a few issues that he would like to address in greater detail in future meetings and in our biennial report.

The first is that the UNH Family Research Laboratory sponsored a Spring lecture series in 1990 during which a seminar on child abuse was given. The title of the presentation was Sexually Abusive Fathers. However, the research that was being presented was almost entirely based on non-biological fathers committing child sexual abuse, not biological fathers. Mike feels that the distinction between biological and non-biological fathers is important to make when analyzing research on fathers, and that a lot of misinformation about biological fathers is being spread based on data about non-biological fathers.

Mike has also been following statistics that the Office of Child Support Enforcement has been releasing. He has noted that more children are not receiving child support today than 20 or 30 years ago, which is contrary to the commonly accepted notion that child support compliance has increased to the benefit of children.

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 PM.