

Rapid City Human Relations Commission Semi-Annual Report January 2016

Complaints Filed With RCHRC

Since the last reporting period, the City Attorney's office has handled fifteen phone calls on behalf of the Rapid City Human Relations Commission. Of those fifteen, seven required a meeting with Assistant City Attorney, Wade Nyberg, in order to gather more information. Subsequent to the meetings, it was determined that four of the potential Complainants did not experience treatment that fits the criteria for unlawful discrimination under city ordinance; two individuals decided later not to file a complaint; and one contact resulted in a verified complaint being drafted, but it was later transferred to the South Dakota Division of Human Rights at the request of the Respondent.

In each case, individuals contacting the RCHRC through the City Attorney's office were given assistance and/or were referred to a more appropriate department or agency if the issue they were concerned with did not fit the criteria for a complaint of unlawful discrimination.

Commission Officers

Elections were held in November with Commissioners holding the following offices:

Chair:	Sue Timmons
Vice Chair:	Andy Ainsley
Administrative Officer:	Jacqueline Gerry

Commissioner Training and In-Service

Jacqueline Gerry completed the orientation and training session for new commissioners in July following her appointment in June. In accordance with our commitment to continuing in-service training for members, Commissioners were recently updated on regulations regarding "Reasonable Accommodations" under the Fair Housing Act as well on revised regulations for "service animals" under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Education and Outreach

Public Service Announcement: Our PSA, entitled Stand-Up, Speak Out, which was developed with the assistance of Tim Reilly of Mid-Continent Communications, has continued to air on local cable channels, KOTA television and on the public access channel. The PSA encourages by-stander action against prejudice and discrimination.

Public Notices: As reported last time, many members of the Native American community indicated that they were not aware of the services that are available through the Rapid City Human Relations

Commission, so notices have been placed periodically in Native Sun News in order to provide information on the types of complaints that we handle and how to contact us. The most recent notices were placed during the LNI.

Power Point: The Commission has a power point presentation available to share with the public that explains the work that we do and the kinds of cases that we handle. Groups and organizations can contact us through the City Attorney's Office to schedule a presentation.

RCHRC Page on City Website: The Commission is developing content to place on the HRC page of the City website. The goal is to make our site informative and user friendly.

Meetings with Groups & Organizations: In order to be informed regarding local initiatives and current civil rights issues, Commission members have continued to attend numerous public meetings regarding the racial issues that are currently being addressed in Rapid City. The Commission has also invited representatives of groups to attend our meetings in order to update us on their work.

Steve Emery, Secretary of the *South Dakota Department of Tribal Affairs* and David Reiss, Director of Inter-governmental Affairs, requested a meeting with the RCHRC while they were in Rapid City in July. Secretary Emery and Mr.Reiss met with three members of the Commission and were given information about and the scope of our jurisdiction since the Commission was revived in 2009.

Rapid City Police Department Chief Karl Jegeris and Cultural Advisor Coordinator Vaughn Vargas met with the Commission in October to update us on the initiatives they are pursuing to improve racial relations and communications between the police department and the Native American Community. The MacArthur Foundation Grant request was discussed and the Commission was asked to provide a letter of support; which we did.

Commission members attended the November "*Conversation about Race & Policing in Rapid City*" meeting and were then provided with a link to the USD report for study

Respectfully submitted,

Sue Timmons,
Chair, Rapid City Human Relations Commission