

African-American Affairs Commission
 Approved Minutes for January 8, 2014
 Legislative Office Building – Room 1B

Present: Commissioner **Campbell**, Commissioner **Canterbury**, Commissioner **Darity**, Commissioner **DelGado**, Commissioner **Jones**, Commissioner **Pierre-Louis**, Commissioner **Wright**, Commissioner **Clark**, and Commissioner **Washington**

Absent: Commissioner **McBride**, Commissioner **Hugley**, and Commissioner **Harris**

Staff in Attendance: AAAC Executive Director, **Glenn Cassis** and AAAC Legislative Analyst, **Subira Gordon**

Public: **Avira Walker** from Planned Parenthood of Hartford and **Hanifa Washington** from the Amistad Committee of New Haven

Agenda Item	Discussion (<i>brief summary</i>)	Action (<i>and by whom</i>)
Meeting called to order	6:08 pm Called to order	Chairman Dr. Fred Pierre-Louis
Roll Call	11 Present and 2 absent	Executive Director Glenn Cassis
Public Comment	<p>Executive Director, Cassis started the meeting by asking Avira Walker from Planned Parenthood to say a few words about the work that she is doing in Hartford. Avira gave a quick overview of how PP would like to collaborate with churches and partner organizations in the north end of Hartford. Chairman Pierre-Louis asked about the mission of PP. Avira explained that the mission of her position is to do outreach in the black community in Hartford. Commissioner Campbell asked about the relationship between churches and PP. Avira explained that it has been a struggle collaborating with religious organizations that are apprehensive about working with PP due to the stigma that planned parenthood is associated with abortion. Avira explained that there were three components to PP: education, outreach and clinical services.</p> <p>Chairman Pierre-Louis asked about the education department, Avira explained that the education department goes into schools and gives classes on human sexuality.</p>	

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	<p>They also train other organizations that have an interest in their course work that focuses on human sexuality.</p> <p>Avira explained that PP has been working with some churches focusing on using abstinence as a way of pregnancy and STD prevention. PP has also been helping the navigators of the ACA with outreach in the north end of Hartford.</p> <p>Commissioner Jones asked about teen pregnancy rates in the city of Hartford. Avira said that she would provide that information to commissioner Jones as she did not have it readily available.</p> <p>Next, Executive Director Cassis introduced Hanifa Washington who is the Executive director for the Amistad America in New Haven. She has been in that role since July 2013.</p> <p>She gave a short overview of her personal background. She has been an instructor on the Amistad ship for a year prior to accepting the position as the Executive Director.</p> <p>Hanifa gave a PowerPoint presentation which included the history of the ship as well as the present and past accomplishments of the Amistad America.</p> <p>The presentation spelled out that the ship is built as an exact replica of the original ship from the 1800's. The ship can hold up to 12 students. It was built for speed and is in the statutes as Connecticut's official tall ship. The ship was originally built to teach the lessons of the original Amistad story. The ship is a floating classroom as well as a symbol for freedom. The ship does port visits and each year reaches between 20 to 50 thousand people each year. The ship goes all the way down to the Caribbean and has been</p>	

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	<p>to Europe and Africa.</p> <p>The Sankofa sail program takes students onto the vessel and teaches students about the mechanics of sailing. There are also apprenticeships where students can learn about sailing. Additionally, the program offers a semester at sea program where students are out to sea for 10-12 weeks. There is also the Science Community and culture internship which works with high school students from New Haven. They are given the opportunity to sail to the Dominican Republic and complete service projects which have been building schools for Haitian children who due to the immigration laws of the Dominican Republic are unable to attend school.</p> <p>The organization is also working with Love 146 to address human trafficking.</p> <p>The organization is currently going through a state audit. Once the audit is over the organization is working on rebuilding the board. The ship has recently finished a short film and there are many upcoming programs. Also the ship has been offered to be a part of a film based on “The Book of Negro” by Alexander Hamilton.</p> <p>Comm. Canterbury asked about the new racist laws that have been passed in the Dominican Republic and how the organization plans to protest them. Hanifa explained that the work that they have been doing with the schools is a way to protest. The Amistad America wrote an article of declaration condemning the actions of the government of the Dominican Republic. Commissioner Canterbury also asked if there have been accidents aboard the ship. Hanifa explained that there is a two week training program before the students board the vessel as well as three days of training aboard the trip.</p>	

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	<p>Commissioner Darity asked about the number of minority students that take advantage of the program. Hanifa explained that the organization had previously not been focused on keeping track of who the ship impacts but would be doing so in the future. Giving a guess based on her experiences Hanifa said that less than 15% of the people who participate in the deck tours are minorities and about 30% of the people who take part in the on board programs are minorities or women.</p> <p>Commissioner Canterbury commented that cost may be a reason why some minorities are not able to participate in the student programs.</p> <p>Hanifa asked if the AAAC would be interested in having someone from the commission be designated as a board member of the Amistad committee.</p> <p>Chairman Pierre-Louis asked about the governance of the organization and how often the board would meet and what the specific requirements were for future board members.</p> <p>Hanifa explained that the by-laws need to be reexamined and the new board members would be a part of the rebuilding process. The initial time commitment would be at least a monthly meeting and eventually move to a quarterly structure.</p> <p>Mr. Cassis commented on the recent news about the Amistad losing its 501c and was wondering if the committee had an advocate in the legislature. Hanifa said that they do not have a specific advocate but have met with Rep. Walker to explain their state of affairs.</p> <p>Commissioner Darity asked if the board would be meeting in New Haven and Hanifa responded that she thought that they would be. She went on to say that there are some requirements for board members spelled out in the by-laws but she is looking for individuals who are committed to the mission of their organization.</p>	

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Consent Agenda	Consent Agenda - Budget Report, Approval of December 2013 Minutes, Executive Committee Reports. There was discussion that Commissioner Clark's name was spelled incorrectly in the minutes.	Moved by Commissioner Wright , seconded by Commissioner Canterbury
Chair Report	Dr. Pierre-Louis reported that the executive committee discussed someone coming from the office of legislative management to meet with the group to talk about group dynamics. He said he would be sending cards to key legislators to beef up the numbers on the commission and he would be attending the opening day session.	
E.D. Report	<p>Mr. Cassis highlighted a few things from his report. The bi-annual audit is being conducted where records are being expected. There is funding for a seasonal position to assist the commission with such items as the veterans program as well as community outreach.</p> <p>The commission is working on a legislative agenda with a focus on education, housing and criminal justice.</p> <p>Mr. Cassis has arranged for individuals to be present at the sites on College Goal Sunday to raise awareness about the ACA.</p> <p>Mr. Cassis asked Commissioner Campbell for an update on MLK Day celebration.</p> <p>Commissioner Campbell informed the commission that the celebration will be held on Monday, January 20th at 11:00 am at the State Capitol Hall of Flags.</p> <p>Commissioner Campbell was volunteered by the chair to be the point person with Legislative management to work on team building and strategic planning for the commission's future.</p> <p>Commissioner Darity asked what role commissioners need to play on College Goal Sunday. Mr. Cassis referred everyone to the website for College Goal Sunday to sign up for volunteering.</p>	
Committee Reports	<u>Classic Awards Committee</u> – Commissioner Wright reported that he has come up with some recommendations for the committees. For the selection committee he chose	

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	<p>Commissioner Clark, Commissioner Campbell, Commissioner Mc Bride and Commissioner Jones. He appointed Commissioner Canterbury to be the MC. He would like to continue with the custom of splitting up the list of potential donors between the commissioners and each commissioner will contact a certain number of people or organizations. The nominations committee will be Commissioner DelGado, Commissioner Hugley and Commissioner Darity. He would also like the commission to buy a full page ad this year the same way it was done last year where each commissioner donated funds towards the ad.</p> <p>Commissioner Campbell- Committee met in December and came up with suggestions for working with whoever is chosen to help with the team building exercises. The committee wants to have an offsite meeting in the spring and another in the fall. Commissioner Jones said Connecticut College would be a great place to host it.</p> <p>Commissioner Clark –Committee has not met since the last meeting but Commissioner Clark asked that is commissioners attend College Goal Sunday it would be great if they wore their AAAC t-shirts and take pictures and email them for the website, newsletter and Facebook.</p>	
Resolutions	<p>178. BE IT RESOLVED: That the African-American Affairs Commission (AAAC) will appoint a committee that will examine and raise awareness of issues that affect African-American veterans who served in the military. The committee will partner with the State of Connecticut Veterans' Affairs Commission, Sigma Pi Phi Alpha Psi Boulé and other organizations that may contribute to the process. Should resources be needed, the committee may request them from the AAAC. The committee will report on its endeavors at the monthly AAAC meetings. The committee should complete its work and submit a report of its activities by December 31, 2014</p>	Moved by Commissioner Jones and Seconded by Commissioner Wright.

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	<p>Mr. Cassis showed the trailer for the documentary “Veterans of color”. He expressed the idea about taking the movie on the road to speak with individuals about the experiences of African Americans in the military.</p> <p>Commissioner Wright, Commissioner Jones, Commissioner Canterbury and Commissioner Campbell volunteered to be a part of the committee.</p>	
Old Business	Mr. Cassis said that the commission is in the process of completing the annual report for 2013.	
New Business	<p>Ms. Subira Gordon gave a brief overview of the legislative process specifically focusing on how commissioners can get involved in the process. Ms. Gordon explained that the public hearing is an ideal time to voice concerns about specific legislation. However, it is not the only avenue. Commissioners are also encouraged to speak with individual legislators about issues that are important to the commission.</p> <p>Commissioner DelGado had a few questions and suggestions about how to make the process work better. She suggested that the commission follow up with the governor’s office to ensure that our public comment is seen. Chairman Pierre-Louis asked about how to initiate a bill and asked about putting ideas forward. Ms. Gordon explained that it would be possible to raise legislation through the committee process.</p>	
Legislative Agenda	No Report	
Upcoming Events	College Goal Sunday on January 26 th	
Adjournment	Adjourned at 8:08 PM	Moved by Commissioner Canterbury seconded by Commissioner Wright

Respectfully Submitted 
 Glenn A. Cassis, Executive Director

Approved by _____
 Donna Campbell, Secretary /Date