

W.G.B.

AGENDA COVER MEMO

AGENDA DATE: November 2, 2009
Memorandum Date: October 28, 2009

TO: LANE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

DEPARTMENT: Office of County Counsel

PRESENTED BY: Liane Richardson, County Counsel

AGENDA ITEM TITLE: REPORT ON STATUS OF LANE COUNTY COMMISSION ON THE ADVANCEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

I. MOTION - There is no motion in front of the Board at this time; this is merely a report to the Board.

II. AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY – The current membership of the Lane County Commission on the Advancement of Human Rights is at five (5) members. The Commission is a commission of eleven (11) members. At this point, there are not enough members of the Commission to form a quorum. Several Board of County Commissioners have asked for possible options available to address the membership needs of the Commission, given the current status.

III. BACKGROUND/IMPLICATIONS OF ACTION

A. Board Action and Other History

The Board of County Commissioners created the Lane County Commission for the Advancement of Human Rights in October 2007. The Commission at that time was established as an 11 member Commission that reports directly to the Board of County Commissioners. The mission of the Commission is to raise awareness and respect for the value of the dignity and worth of all human beings including the fair and equal treatment of all persons. Toward that end, the Commission is committed to ensuring that human rights are a central part of every County program; reflecting and respecting cultural and individual diversity. In recent weeks, there have been a host of members who have resigned from the Commission for a variety of reasons. At this point, there are only five members of the Commission remaining. With five members, there is no quorum, so there can not be any official meetings of the Commission, nor any official actions.

In January of 2009, the Board of County Commissioners established a Good Governance policy. Part of the Good Governance Board Order sought to make as many committees and commissions as possible similar in regards to the number of members and how their appointments are made. At that time, the Lane County Commission for the Advancement of Human Rights makeup was not changed, given the recency of the appointments of members to that commission.

B. Policy Issues

The Board has a policy regarding the makeup of all committees and commissions that are not regulated by state or federal law. The Lane County Commission for the Advancement of Human Rights is not so regulated.

C. Board Goals

The Board has a goal of being supportive of diversity and of the protection of human rights in Lane County.

D. Financial and/or Resource Considerations

A staff person is assigned to work with the Commission. The more members of a Commission or committee, the more time it takes for the staff person assigned. There are also slight costs for food at the meetings that go up the more members there are, but these costs are fairly minimal.

E. Analysis

At this moment, the Commission is not an active Commission, as there is not a quorum. The Board of County Commissioners desires to have a functioning Commission for the Advancement of Human Rights. Therefore, some action needs to take place on the Board's part in order to have a functioning and viable Commission.

F. Alternatives/Options

There are several options available to the Board. The first option would be to simply fill the six empty slots currently open. This would bring the Commission up to a level where a quorum can be established. However, simply filling the six empty slots would not accomplish the Board's policy goal to have as much consistency as possible between the various committees and commissions.

Another option would be to reduce the Commission to a level that is identical to that of other committees and commissions. The Commission would then have a total of seven (7) members, five (5) appointed by individual commissioners and serving at the will of those appointing commissioners, and two (2) at-large appointees serving at the will of the Board of Commissioners as a whole. This could be accomplished in one of two ways. There are five members currently still appointed to the Commission. The Board of County Commissioners could interview those five current members and determine if they wish to have one of those members serve as their individual appointment. The Board as a whole could then determine if they wished to have the remaining individuals appointed as at-large members. There would still be at least two openings that would need to be filled.

The other way to accomplish a move from an eleven (11) member Commission to a seven (7) member Commission would be to open up all 7 positions for applications and appointment. Those currently serving in the capacity of a member would reapply if they were interested in continuing membership in the Commission.

IV. TIMING/IMPLEMENTATION

The decision should be made as soon as possible so that the Commission can begin to meet and work together again on important human rights issues affecting the County.

V. RECOMMENDATION

Staff's recommendation is to move the Commission to a seven (7) member commission. This would make the Commission consistent with the Good Governance Board Order and with other committees and commissions throughout Lane County. This is the perfect time to address the change, as the current membership is five (5). As to whether or not the Board should seek applications for all seven positions immediately, or first

interview the current members and then make a determination, there are pros and cons to each option.

Whichever way the Board proceeds, there will still need to be new appointments to the Commission. In some ways, it would make it much simpler to advertise for all 7 positions, have the current members apply if they are interested in continuing on the Commission, and making the appointments based on what the entire applicant pool looks like. However, it is helpful to have some consistency carry forward from one version to another version of the Commission. That would argue for meeting with interested members and determining if some or all of them will be appointed by the Board prior to looking for additional members.

VI. ATTACHMENTS

None.