

Ohio Commission on Fatherhood (“OCF”)

Minutes from the Meeting of

Thursday, February 04, 2010

<p>Commissioners Present:</p> <p>Peter Lawson Jones, Chairman</p> <p>Mr. David Kontur, Vice Chairman</p> <p>Mr. Robert Boykins</p> <p>Mr. Kevin Conwell</p> <p>Mr. Cedric Collins</p> <p>Mr. Robert “Bo” Chilton</p> <p>Dr. Diane Karther</p> <p>Mr. Steven Killpack</p> <p>Mr. Joseph Maiorano</p> <p>Mr. Scott Neely</p> <p>Ms. Carri Brown</p> <p>Mr. Greg Landsman</p>	<p>Guests:</p> <p>Rose Handon Former Commissioner</p> <p>Andre Lampkins Office of the Ohio Treasurer</p> <p>Mark Margolis Office of the Ohio Treasurer</p> <p>Winston Gragg Guest of Commissioner Conwell</p> <p>Carlton Garner Guest of Commissioner Conwell</p> <p>Chelsea Bigler Guest of Commissioner Karther</p>
<p>Commissioners Represented by Designee:</p> <p>Director Angela Cornelius-Dawson (by Jewel Smith)</p> <p>Representative Marian Harris (by Kelly Woolard, Legislative Aide)</p> <p>Representative Ron Magg (by Michael Evans, Legislative Aide)</p> <p>Representative Carlton Weddington (by Ashley Love, Legislative Aide)</p> <p>Senator Ray Miller (by Nicole Harper, Legislative Aide)</p>	<p>OCF Staff Present:</p> <p>Mr. J. Tracy Robinson, Executive Director</p> <p>Ms. Monica Mahoney</p> <p>Ms. Whitney Logan</p>

I. Call to Order & Welcome

The meeting was called to order at 11:15 am by Executive Director, Tracy Robinson. Chairman Peter Lawson Jones was en route and arrived shortly thereafter. A quorum was achieved.

II. Introduction of New Commissioners and Guests

Director Robinson introduced himself and welcomed our guests to the meeting.

III. Approval of November 17, 2009 Minutes

Chairman Jones moved, with Commissioner Eddie Joyce seconding, that the minutes from the meeting of November 17, 2009, be approved as submitted. The motion carried unanimously.

IV. Executive Director's Report

Director Robinson provided a written summary of his activities in November, December and January, a synopsis of which is incorporated in these minutes.

A. Outreach:

Director Robinson highlighted the Commission's and/or his involvement in the following events and activities:

- Presented at an "Inside Out Dads" class at Madison Correction Institution. Spoke to incarcerated fathers regarding the importance of reconciling with their families and becoming engaged fathers. Met a 22 year-old man with six children by six different mothers.
- Participated on a panel at the Third Annual Symposium at Windsor Stem Academy.

Commissioner Bo Chilton commended Director Robinson for his representation of the Commission.

Guest Andre Lampkins also commended Director Robinson for having a presence at Windsor because grew up in that area and knows the hardships inherent in being raised there.

- Briefed several employees of Department of Rehabilitation and Correction on OCF's purpose. Discussed video production process and possible content for a video series on father engagement and the reconciliation of inmates with their families. Commissioner Greg Landsman said the Prison News Network produced the annual report for the Governor's Office of Faith Based and Community Initiatives (GOFBCI).

B. OFI-RFGA 2009-2011

Director Robinson informed the Commission about the seven grantees that the Request for Grant Applications Committee selected for funding. The protest period is complete, and the official public announcement of the seven grantees has been made. The purchase orders are currently being issued by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) Contract Office. The grant program period will be 15-16 months, with \$160,000 allocated to each grantee over the life of the grant. Grantees are required to serve at least fourteen fathers per month and submit timely reports in order for their funding to continue during the second half of the biennium.

Upon the recommendation of Nicole Holder, one of the members of the review team, two of the grant applications were referred to the Ohio Ethics Commission for review of potential conflicts of interest. The Ohio Ethics Commission found no conflicts. Both grant applications scored above the minimum and will be awarded funding. The two programs have not been publicly announced because Director Robinson is awaiting an official award letter from the Contract Office.

V. Overview & Update of HB 349

Representatives Carlton Weddington and Ron Maag are co-sponsors of H.B. 349, which contains the proposed amendments to the OCF statute, O.R.C. § 5101.34. The bill would amend §§ 5101.34, 5101.341 and 5101.342 O.R.C. by revising the membership, staffing and duties of the Commission. Chairman Jones testified before the House State Government Committee and Director Robinson responded to questions. Burl Lemon, Executive Director of grantee Forever Dads, and Commissioner

Scott Neely were present and provided written testimony. Commissioner Neely noted that the Representatives on the Committee had many questions and they seemed very intrigued by the work of the Commission. Subsequent to the hearings, H.B. 349 was approved by the House State Government Committee and referred to the full House for its consideration. Michael Evans, Representative Maag's legislative aide, believes that H.B. 349 will be brought before the House. Commissioner Landsman said he would check with the Governor's Legislative Committee on the status of the bill. Chairman Jones has called Speaker Armond Budzinski's office to request that the measure be moved above the "black line" as soon as possible.

VI. The State of Fatherhood in Ohio

Executive Director Robinson provided a power point presentation on the state of fatherhood in Ohio. He highlighted the history of the Commission, its current status and future prospects, a synopsis of which appears below.

History

Cuyahoga County Commissioner Peter Lawson Jones, while a member of the Ohio House of Representatives, authored the legislation that created the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood. The OCF was established, effective July 1, 1999, and codified in § 5101.34 Ohio Revised Code.

In 2007 Governor Ted Strickland resurrected the OCF by appointing Commission members and setting aside a portion of GOFBCI's appropriation for staff support and an Ohio Fatherhood Initiative grant program.

The OCF currently has twenty commissioners who serve without compensation. They represent all three branches of government: the executive, legislative and judicial.

The Commission had four major challenges: achieving a quorum at its meetings and engaging commissioners, diminishing political polarization by demonstrating that fatherhood is not a Democratic

or Republican issue, and changing public perception that absent and disengaged fathers are just an inner-city urban problem.

Current

We have a well organized Commission with committed staff, a board that achieves quorums, the non-partisan support of elected officials and community leaders and a respect throughout the state. The OCF's work, as established by statute, falls into four areas: funding fatherhood programs, training practitioners, developing policy recommendations and engaging the communities around the issue of fatherhood.

1. Fund Fatherhood Programs: In 2008-2009, the OCF funded ten local fatherhood programs with over \$2.4 million and will fund nine programs with \$1.5 million in 2010-2011. All fathers participating in funded programs will be required to complete the Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI) before and after receiving services. The AAPI is an evaluative tool that is used worldwide to assess child-rearing attitudes and behaviors, the results of which will provide measurable data on the impact of fatherhood services on the recipients' attitudes over time. Commissioner Landsman stated that GOFBCI is currently researching how to include past grantee performance in the evaluation and selection process.
2. Train Practitioners: Child welfare training will be offered to fatherhood practitioners and to instruct child welfare staff as to how to both engage dads and conduct thorough searches for non-custodial fathers. Inside Out Dads training will be offered to equip ODRC staff to strengthen inmates' fathering skills, teach incarcerated fathers how to nurture and encourage their children and to communicate effectively.
3. Develop Policy Recommendations: The OCF supports pending federal and state legislation that strengthens fathers including House Bill 2979: Julia Carson Responsible Fatherhood & Healthy Families Act of 2009, Senate Bill 1309: Responsible Fatherhood & Healthy Families Act of 2009 and H.B. 349. The Commission also supports and serves on various committees.

4. Engage the Community: The OCF co-sponsors conferences and community events; is represented at conferences, programs and schools throughout the state; participates on boards and committees; hosts community conversations on fatherhood; operates a website as a valuable resource; and generates an e-newsletter and various brochures on fatherhood.

Future

The Ohio County Fatherhood Initiative will allow all 88 counties in the state to have a fatherhood program. For all interested counties a national consultant will provide a “Father Friendly Check-Up” assessment, conduct a needs and assets evaluation, help organize a “Leadership Summit on Fatherhood” and produce a fatherhood plan. Each county leadership team is to include a county commissioner, judge, director of child support, director of child welfare, a faith-based entity and/or local business leader. Every county is also to submit a commitment letter. The OCF will allocate funding for planning and/or initial pilot.

VII. Discussion and Decision

A. Meeting of Legislative Subcommittee

Commissioner Neely reported on actions taken by the subcommittee. Committee members drafted a letter urging members of the Ohio General Assembly to consider provisions of Senate Bill 22 that impact fathers, specifically the provision that allows community diversion for non-payment of child support. Chairman Jones reminded Commissioners that the panel does not endorse legislation and should simply request thoughtful consideration of the provisions of the legislation that relate to fatherhood.

Commissioner Brown stated that, over the past two years, seven Ohio counties participated in a pilot prison diversion program funded with “Community Correction Act” grants and, according to recent data from the ODRC, child support payments increased 98% in one year when fathers were sentenced to

prison diversion programs, and prison commitments for felony non-payment of child support dropped 22% statewide, with 610 commitments in 2009 as compared to 781 in 2008. Commissioner Brown stated that these changes prove that if a father can complete his sentence while keeping his job, he will be better able to provide for his family. Moreover, prisoners who maintain family ties enjoy much greater success once released.

Commissioner Neely moved that the letter be revised as discussed, signed by Director Robinson and Chairman Jones and sent with the consent of the Commission; Commissioner Kontur seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

B. Fatherhood Commitment Pledge

Commissioners liked the idea of the commitment pledge but raised questions about the lapel pin. Former Commissioner Handon asked why the Ohio emblem is not in the middle of the pin rather than a star. Director Robinson said the star was selected by Chairman Jones after reviewing several designs, none of which included the state emblem. The lapel pin will be distributed as is, but feedback for potential adjustments to future pins is welcome and will be seriously considered.

VIII. Announcements & New Business

Commissioner Neely announced that the retirement dinner for Terry Collin, Director of the ODRC, that will be held February 20, 2010. The Commission will present him with an award recognizing his advocacy on behalf of fathers.

IX. Next Meeting

Date: Thursday, April 1, 2010
Time: 11:00 am – 1:00 pm
Place: Lazarus Building
Conference Room A601
50 West Town Street
Columbus, Ohio

X. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1: 17 pm.