

Ohio Commission on Fatherhood (“OCF”)

Minutes from the Meeting of

Thursday, February 4, 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 has been 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 Correctional 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 complimented Director Robinson for his representation of the Commission.

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

- Briefed several employees of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) 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 Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) Contract Office is currently issuing the related purchase orders. 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 (OEC) for review of potential conflicts of interest. The OEC found no conflicts. Both grant applications scored above the minimum and will be funded. 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 et seq. The bill would amend O.R.C. §§ 5101.34, 5101.341 and 5101.342 by revising the membership, staffing and duties of the Commission. Both Chairman Jones and Director Robinson testified before the House State Government Committee on the measure. Burl Lemon, Executive Director of grantee Forever Dads, and Commissioner Scott Neely

were present and provided written testimony. Commissioner Neely noted that the committee members had many questions and seemed very intrigued by the work of the Commission. Subsequent to the hearings, the committee approved and referred H.B. 349 to the full House for consideration. Michael Evans, Representative Maag's legislative aide, believes that H.B. 349 soon 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 Buddish's office to request that the measure be moved above the "black line" as soon as possible.

VI. The State of Fatherhood in Ohio

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 Commission was established, effective July 1, 1999, and codified in ORC § 5101.34 et seq. 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 Commission had four major challenges: achieving a quorum at its meetings. engaging commissioners, diminishing political polarization by demonstrating that fatherhood is not a Democratic or Republican issue, and changing public perception that absent disengaged fathers was not exclusively 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 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 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 are 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 child welfare staff on how best to engage dads and conduct thorough searches for non-custodial fathers. "Inside Out Dads" training will be offered to ODRC staff to strengthen inmates' fathering skills and to teach incarcerated fathers how to nurture and encourage their children and to communicate effectively with them.
3. Develop Policy Recommendations: The OCF supports pending federal and state legislation that strengthens fathers including U.S. House Bill 2979: the Julia Carson Responsible Fatherhood & Healthy Families Act of 2009, Senate Bill 1309: the Responsible Fatherhood & Healthy Families Act of 2009 and Ohio H.B. 349. Director Robinson also serves on various committees on behalf of the Commission.

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 eighty-eight counties in the state to have a fatherhood program. For 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 as well as 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 an initial pilot program.

VII. Discussion and Decision

A. Meeting of Legislative Subcommittee

Commissioner Neely reported on actions taken by the subcommittee. Subcommittee 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 pending before the Ohio General Assembly 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 by “Community Correction Act” grants. According to recent data from the ODRC, when fathers were sentenced to prison diversion programs, child support payments increased 98% and prison commitments for felony non-payment of child support dropped 22% statewide

(610 commitments in 2009 versus 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 a star, as opposed to the Ohio emblem, is featured in the middle of the pin. 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, the former Director of the ODRC will be held February 20, 2010. The Commission will present him with an award recognizing his advocacy on behalf of fathers.

IX. Next Meeting

Thursday, April 1, 2010, 11:00 am – 1:00 pm in the Lazarus Building.

X. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:17 pm.