

**Ohio Commission on Fatherhood**

**Minutes from the Meeting of**

**Thursday, Nov. 14, 2013**

<p><b>Commissioners Present:</b></p> <p>Senator Bill Beagle</p> <p>Deputy Director Kara Bertke-Wente</p> <p>Representative Tim Derickson</p> <p>Mr. Steven Killpack</p> <p>Mr. Thomas Joyce</p> <p>Mr. Chad Hibbs</p> <p>Mr. John Hurley</p> <p>Dr. Randy Leite</p> <p>Representative Jeffrey McClain</p> <p>Mr. Scott Neely</p> <p>Dr. John Richard</p> <p>Representative Roland Winburn</p> <p><b>Designees of Commissioners</b></p> <p>Tracy Ensign for Kim Hettel</p> <p>Mike Falatach for Luis Vazquez</p> <p>Damien Hardy for Senator Eric Kearny</p>	<p><b>Guests:</b></p> <p>Jim Bates, Ohio State University Extension</p> <p>Susan Colbert, Ohio State University Extension</p> <p>Betsy DeMatteo, Ohio State University Extension</p> <p>Daniel Fitzpatrick, ODJFS Office of Legislation</p> <p>Darryl Grayson, Urban Light Ministries</p> <p>Melanie Hart, Ohio State University Extension</p> <p>Carmen Irving, Ohio State University Extension</p> <p>Senator Frank LaRose</p> <p>Barry Sheets, The Ridge Project</p> <p>Rev. Eli Williams, Fatherhood Clark County</p> <p><b>OCF Staff Present:</b></p> <p>Director Kimberly Dent</p> <p>Mrs. Whitney Addison</p> <p>Ms. Monica Mahoney</p>
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## **I. Call to Order & Welcome New Commissioners**

Chairman Bill Beagle called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM. He welcomed our guests and Ohio Commission on Fatherhood (OCF) commissioners. Several of the commissioners are newly appointed and attending a Commission meeting for the first time including Kara Bertke-Wente (representing ODJFS), Chad Hibbs (representing Families and Children First Council), John Hurley (representing Mental Health and Addiction Services), John Richard (representing the Ohio Department of Education) and Representative Roland Winburn. A quorum was achieved.

## **II. Approval of Minutes from April 18 and June 13**

The minutes from April 18 and June 13, 2013 were approved as submitted.

## **III. New Legislation**

Senator Frank LaRose (R-27) was invited by Chairman Beagle to speak to OCF about new legislation on equal parenting that Senator LaRose is preparing to introduce. As the father of two young girls, Senator LaRose believes that all children should have a loving father active in their lives. He started working with Senators Skindell and Grendel on this legislation two years ago during the 129<sup>th</sup> General Assembly when it was introduced as SB 144. When they left the Senate, Senator LaRose became the lead sponsor.

The bill has not yet been assigned a number and the current draft is 30 pages. Senator John Ekland (R-18), who has legal expertise, is working with him on the bill. They have met with juvenile judges and other people involved with the issue. The more Senator LaRose learns about the issue of equal parenting, the more he realizes how complicated and emotionally complex this is for parents. Therefore he has not rushed to reintroduce the bill.

According to the draft bill, when deciding matters of custody the law should begin with the presumption of equal parenting. Moreover, if a judge does not assign equal custody, there must be a legal justification. All family law is based on the principal of doing what is in the best interest of the child. Following this idea, children should have equal access to both of their parents.

Senator LaRose has sent a draft to Family Law Committee of the Ohio Bar Association and several Family Court judges. He needs to follow up with those groups to get their feedback. Judges who deal with this issue throughout Ohio have said the most important thing is to keep judicial discretion. Senator LaRose wants to find balance between setting standards for judges but not be so prescriptive that human decision making is removed. He wants the law be workable and fair and welcomes input from the Commission.

Chairman Beagle asked whether there will be interested party meetings prior to introducing the bill. According to Senator LaRose, interested parties are very passionate about this issue which sometimes does not allow them to be patient or pragmatic. Fathers in particular often feel they have not been treated fairly by the judicial system and managing their expectations has been a challenge. Senator LaRose would like to have another interested parties meeting and welcomes commissioners' participation.

Senator LaRose values this group's collective expertise and hopes for the Commission's support of the legislation. Senator LaRose will email a draft of the bill to Senator Beagle who will forward it to the other commissioners for their review and feedback. According to Chairman Beagle, at the August OCF retreat several commissioners said that they wanted to track legislation that impacts fathers and families but the commission did not take a position on whether we can endorse or oppose specific legislation. Representative Derickson said the bill sounds interesting and he thinks he would support it. Chairman Beagle suggested that

the commission consider this question at the next meeting and identify Commissioners interested in reviewing the bill and providing feedback to Senator LaRose.

According to Steve Killpack, Ohio Practitioners Network for Fathers and Families (OPNFF) was concerned that the prior version of the bill removed the language “best interest of the child”. When that happened, OPNFF removed their support. Senator LaRose asked Commissioner Killpack to send him suggestions about where that language should be included.

#### **IV. Ohio State University Extension**

Susan Colbert from the Franklin County Office of Ohio State University (OSU) Extension and several of her colleagues (Jim Bates - State Specialist, Betsy DeMatteo - Hamilton County, Melanie Hart - Greene County, and Carmen Irving - Family and Consumer Sciences) spoke about their work and submitted a written proposal about opportunities for collaboration between OSU and OCF. According to Ms. Colbert, OSU Extension is uniquely positioned to assist fatherhood throughout the state because they have offices in every county and have a trusted relationship with the community because they are not an enforcement agency.

Dr. Bates said that he applied to be an OCF commissioner. He works on fatherhood programming including, “Boot Camp for New Dads” and “Successful Co-parenting”, a program for separating and divorcing parents. He also does program design, implementation and evaluation. As a university they have increased capacity to evaluate and analyze data. OSU Extension could provide these services for OCF. He also said that he knows many academics who study fatherhood and he could connect OCF with them.

Ms. Hart works at Greene County OSU Extension which was an OCF grantee in 2009-11. At that time they worked with a local family violence prevention center to provide free classes for fathers. They also partnered with Greene County Family & Children First Council who provided a mediator at no cost and a visitation center that educated fathers on their visitation rights as well as provided supervised visitation.

Representative Derickson said that his background is in agriculture and that is all he knew about OSU Extension. Chairman Beagle asked whether people confuse OSU Extension with their agricultural mission. Ms. Colbert replied that many people do not realize that they are “more than 1000 cows and plows”; they also have innovative programs in urban and suburban areas. Representative Winburn suggested that the Commission review OSU Extension’s proposal and discuss what other organizations like OSU Extension would align with the OCF mission.

## **V. Urban Light Ministries**

Urban Light Ministries (ULM) is one of the six current grantees selected for funding by OCF. They serve fathers in the southwestern region of Ohio in Clark, Montgomery, Champaign and Madison Counties. Daryl Grayson, ULM’s current Director of Programming and Eli Williams, ULM’s founder, spoke about ULM’s work. Their Power Point Presentation can be found on the OCF website. Some of the highlights include:

- Since October 2013, ULM has served 78 fathers of 167 children in 700 hours of classes at eight locations
- They provide services in four counties and have served fathers from 18 counties in the past month
- ULM has an innovative partnership with Clark County Children Services and Project Jericho which works with children in foster care and biological fathers. The goal is to reunite them once fathers complete fatherhood classes.

## **VI. Clark County Fatherhood Initiative**

Reverend Eli Williams spoke about his new role as Director of the Clark County Fatherhood Initiative (CCFI) which formed as a direct result of the Ohio County Fatherhood Initiative training OCF provided to Clark County in 2011. Leadership of CCFI is a cross section of the community and the current members are:

- John Detrick, County Commissioner
- David Dombrowski, JFSCC Director
- Dr. David Estrop, Springfield City Schools District Superintendent
- Leslie Crew, County Family & Children First Council Director
- Warren Copeland, Mayor, City of Springfield
- Eli Williams, Director Fatherhood Clark County and Urban Light Min.
- Marilyn Demma, At Large
- Bob Suver, At Large
- Wynette Carter-Smith, Chief Probation Officer
- Judicial Advisor: Hon. Joseph Monnin, Juvenile Court Judge

Since the training they have convened several successful county-wide events for fathers and families which raise awareness of the importance of responsible fatherhood and inform people about the resources and programs available in Clark County. Rev. William's Power Point Presentation can be found on the OCF website and more information about CCFI can be found at [www.clarkfamilyfirst.org/fatherhood](http://www.clarkfamilyfirst.org/fatherhood).

## **VII. Recap on Summit County's Fathers Walk**

According to Director Kimberly Dent, Commissioner William Green attended Summit County's annual Fathers Walk and he reported to her that it was very successful with over 3,000 fathers and children

participating. Director Dent hopes to expand this to more counties throughout Ohio. She will schedule a meeting with Dr. Richard to discuss possible support from the Department of Education.

### **VIII. Update from Executive Director**

Director Dent provided a written report summarizing OCF staff's activities from July to November.

Some of the highlights include:

- The last RFGA implements a new regional approach. The current grantees serve multiple counties in one of five Ohio regions
- Staff has conducted site visits to all six grantees
- Staff has provided information to inmates about fatherhood programs and answered questions about Child Support

Commissioner Scott Neely thanked OCF staff for their work in prisons. He is meeting with DRC Director Mohr next week to discuss how to implement the curriculum, "Inside Out Dads" in all the prisons. Commissioner Neely believes that Noble Corrections is a model facility in integrating fatherhood coursework with rehabilitation.

### **IX. Strategic Retreat follow-up**

Because several of the commissioners are newly appointed, Chairman Beagle provided a recap of the OCF Strategic Retreat held on August 26, 2013 in the Senate Majority Conference Room. The Executive Committee decided to convene a strategic retreat so that commissioners would have time for more in depth conversations.

Eleven recommendations emerged from the retreat:

1. Identify "Action Items" from commission meetings.

2. Prior to commission meetings, email commissioners asking them to report on what is happening at the entity they represent on the commission that impacts fatherhood. Ask commissioners to provide a written response via email.
3. At every commission meeting ask commissioners to provide a “1 minute snapshot” of what is happening at their agency through a “fatherhood lens”
4. Ask every organization represented on the commission to develop a strategic plan on fatherhood
5. Feature an organization represented on the commission during each meeting
6. Select issues of interest related to fatherhood and have high level systemic discussions of how the commission and the organizations represented on the commission can address the issues. Some suggested issues include Teen Fathers, Divorced Fathers, Incarcerated Fathers, and Premature Fatherhood Prevention.
7. Track legislative issues that are on-going
8. Hear success stories at commission meetings
9. Invite people with a national perspective on fatherhood (e.g. Dr. Phil spoke to DRC)
10. Provide reading materials before the commission meetings
11. Create a strategic plan for the commission and monitor progress towards reaching goals

In addition to grantees, Chairman Beagle would like to hear from the agencies represented on OCF to learn what they are doing in terms of fatherhood initiatives. He asked Scott Neely to present about DRC initiatives at the February meeting and to invite Director. Monica Mahoney will contact Commissioner Cedric Collins and see if he and Director Harvey Reed from Department of Youth Services would present at the following meeting in April. Chairman Beagle would like other commissioners to volunteer to present at future meetings.

Regarding recommendation 7, Commissioner Killpack said that there is a new group of people reintroducing child support legislative reform. Commissioner Neely said that there is also legislation revisiting collateral sanctions.

Representative Derickson said he remembered former Director Tracy Robinson was developing a Fatherhood Mobile App, working with a professor and friend of Representative Derickson's at Miami University. Representative Derickson will invite the professor to present at a future commission meeting.

**X. Mission Statement & 2014 Calendar**

Monica Mahoney shared the current mission statement of the OCF and a proposed revision. She asked for additional suggestions from the commissioners. She will follow up by email with a brief survey of the various proposals and ask commissioners to vote on their favorite. The results will be shared at the next commission meeting. Ms. Mahoney also distributed a proposed meeting calendar for 2014.

**XI.** The meeting adjourned at 11:55 PM.