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IN CITY COUNCIL

DEC 7 1978

READ:

WHEREUPON IT IS ORDERED THAT
THE SAME BE RECEIVED.

Rose M. Mendonca CLERK



FOR THE YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 1978



Providence Human Relations Commission

40 FOUNTAIN STREET • PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND 02903 • (401) 421-3708

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
Hon. Vincent A. Cianci, Jr.

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Frederick C. Williamson

VICED CHAIRMAN
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SECRETARY
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Stanley Grossman
Rabbi Leslie Y. Gutterman
John M. Huntley
Harry Kizirian
Lynn H. Smith

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Benjamin W. Little

September 1, 1978

The Honorable Vincent A. Cianci, Jr., Mayor
Honorable Members of the City Council

Dear Mayor Cianci and Members of the City Council:

We hereby submit for your review the Annual Report of the
Providence Human Relations Commission.

Very truly yours,

Frederick C. Williamson
Chairman

FCW:jg

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With the mixed emotions of frustration and hope, I submit my final message as Executive Director of the Providence Human Relations Commission.

An assessment of the duties of this Commission shows that, while it is the role of the federal government to provide direction, support and the necessary tools to effect change, it is the mandate of local governments to conceive, carry out and monitor such change.

Against a backdrop of community naivete and general non-support, racism and bigotry remain virulent strains in the body of our society. On the federal level is the shame of the Bakke Decision, while locally, in a mire of back-stabbing and petty jealousies, we are confronted with the Anti-Discrimination Ordinance's ignoble end.

Nonetheless, this Commission has attempted to rise above the reprehensible behavior of selfish, politically motivated individuals and to be responsive to community needs and the ideal of a truly equal society.

This Commission must remain a nucleus of activity, establishing progressive roles in the areas of housing, education, police/community relations and employment. Although strictly non-partisan, the Commission has an obligation to respond to legitimate needs of the city administration, which in turn should view its Commission only as a resource for the PEOPLE of Providence. As soon as the Commission becomes a pawn of any political faction and/or individual it violates a moral trust and becomes just another evil in the system it is sworn to protect.

The fall of the Providence Anti-Discrimination Ordinance bears witness to the malignancy of a system dedicated to self-perpetuation at any cost. The ultimate confrontation was one of the needs of the people vs. political expediency. Beneath all the rhetoric, behind all the posturing, was the unavoidable truth of racism and institutional discrimination. In a sense one must grudgingly admire the anti-Ordinance strategy; not only was the system preserved (at a terrible cost to our community), but this Commission was denied the power to further investigate and enforce our laws with any semblance of official strength.

Perhaps we were at fault, guilty of bad timing and a persistent faith in the human spirit which is refuted by local history and common sense. Yet we had no choice but to act, not just for abstract ideals, but for the people.

So much for my frustrations.

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I remain optimistic that this Commission can continue to fight for the People of the city. Despite major setbacks it has managed to make meaningful, lasting inroads into Providence. I believe that the only way to continue this work is to insure that the Commission grows and acquires strength.

Partial community support is not enough. Only complete backing, ranging from full personal commitment to simply a friendly word, can insure success. Remember, without community participation this Commission is but a paper tiger. THE PEOPLE ARE THE COMMISSION!

Finally, I look forward to the 1980's, with all the vagaries of style, pace, community action and governmental reform peculiar to each decade, with great expectations. Robert Kennedy left this message for posterity:

"Let no one be discouraged by the belief that there is nothing one man or one woman can do against the enormous array of the world's ills.....Few will have the greatness to bend history itself.....It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centres of energy and daring, those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance."

Handwritten signature of Benjamin W. Little.

The Providence Human Relations Commission (PHRC) was established in 1963 to combat the civil turmoil which had been building in our cities since World War II and finally erupted in the 1960's. At that time the Commission was charged with the responsibility of fostering mutual understanding among all racial, religious and ethnic groups in the city. The duties of PHRC have included the investigation of complaints of discrimination and conciliation of intergroup problems in the areas of housing, education, employment and public accommodations.

Over the past fifteen years PHRC has studied the problems of discrimination specific to Providence, made recommendations to the Mayor and City Council, conducted workshops and cooperated with other agencies in an effort to educate the public to its ideals and to ensure equal opportunity for all residents. However, during this time the enforcement of equal opportunity law in Providence has been left to state and federal agencies empowered to order compliance by local residents.

The Commission has been left to a "jawboning" technique of resolving discrimination complaints. Although the services it has provided as a conciliatory agent have been valuable, it has also been limited in its efforts to end discriminatory practices and their long range effects.

APRIL, 1977

PHRC submitted to the City Council a new Comprehensive Anti-Discrimination Ordinance for the City of Providence. The Ordinance was designed to provide substantially the same coverage as state equal opportunity law and would grant PHRC the power of enforcement. This would create much needed administrative relief at a local level by allowing federal and state agencies to defer charges to PHRC. The Ordinance prohibited discrimination in the areas of housing, education, employment, credit and public accommodations on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age or physical handicap.

NOVEMBER, 1977

An Ordinance Committee of the City Council charged to study the legislation and make recommendations to the full council, held a public hearing. All speakers testified in favor of the measure-providing momentum to the proposed ordinance.

MARCH, 1978

An increase in public controversy over the ordinance prompted a second public hearing. Over 350 persons attended with approximately 30 speaking on each side of the issue. The most controversial issue at this hearing was the "sexual orientation" phrase intended to include homosexuals among the groups protected by the ordinance.

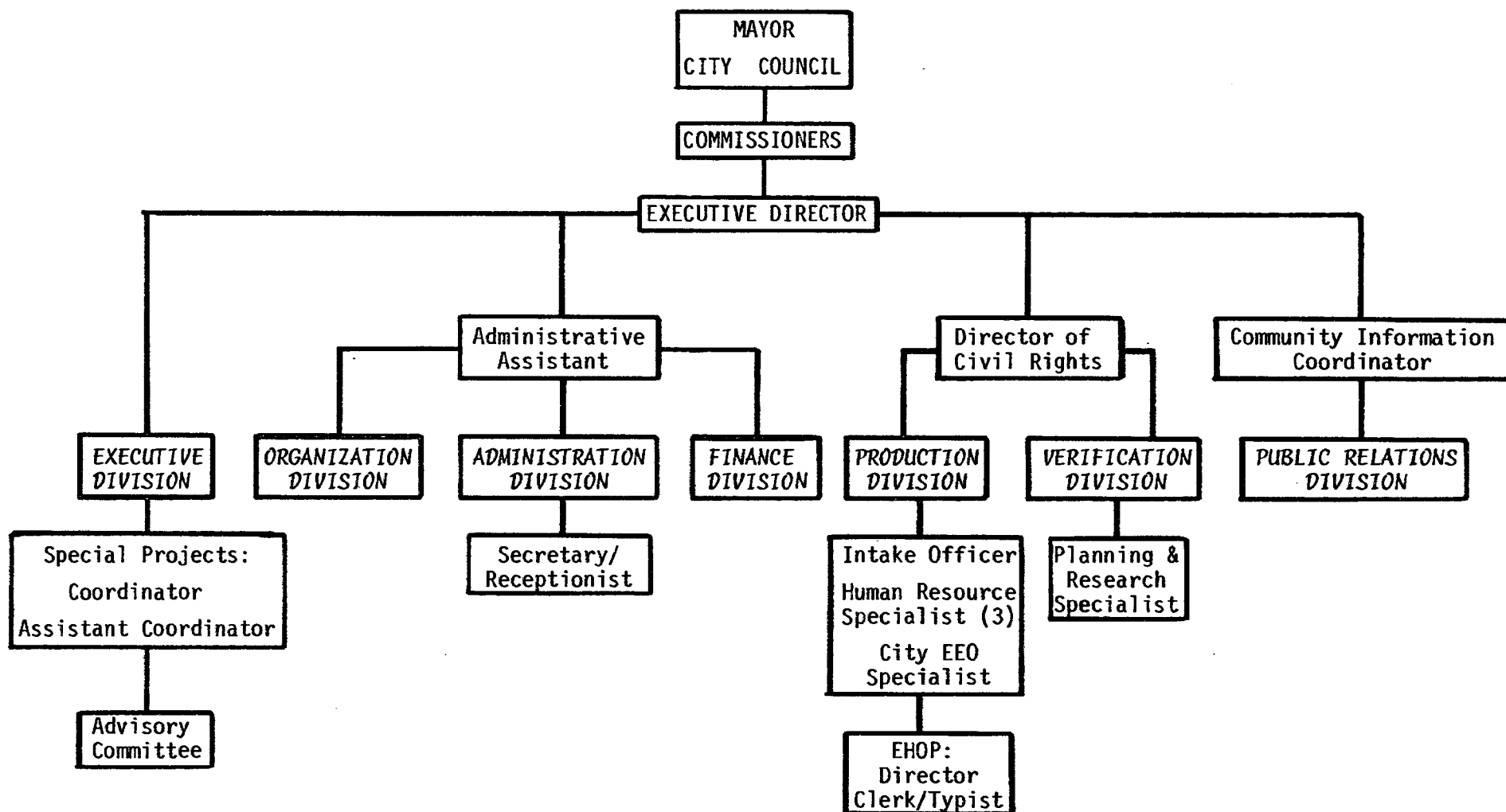
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APRIL, 1978

Nearly one year after the Ordinance was originally submitted, the committee recommended against its passage and it was defeated by a full council vote of 18 to 6. Councilman Ronald Henries resubmitted the ordinance with the sexual orientation phrase deleted.

JUNE, 1978

The Ordinance Committee conducted several work sessions with members of the Commission and representatives from other organizations. A public hearing was held with 49 speakers giving testimony; 30 for and 19 against the proposal. Many who spoke against the ordinance were opposed only to some of its provisions.



PRODUCT:
A totally
efficient
service to
the community

PRODUCT:
A well established
Commission capable
of expansion

PRODUCT:
Orderly run
administrative
services for
the Commission

PRODUCT:
A well
financed
Commission

PRODUCT:
A community
of people
living and
working to-
gether
harmoniously

PRODUCT:
Properly
reviewed and
completed
cases

PRODUCT:
A well-known and
well thought of
Commission

Secretary/Receptionist and Planning and Research Specialist were hired.

Research began for the purchase of a microcomputer and the development of a system for statistical analysis.

Management Policies/Personnel Policies and Standards were revised. The Commission is continuously developing sound policy and standards to contribute to positive employer/employee relations and to foster good morale.

An Organizational Board was developed as a management tool to measure individual performance and overall productivity. The Board illustrates the seven divisions and 21 departments within the Commission indicating the sequence of all Commission activities and the assignment of individual responsibility.

Responsibilities of the Production staff were reassigned and new intake forms developed. Operations of the Department of Community Relations were shifted to emphasize special projects. This was done so that its efforts would affect a larger number of community members through educational programs.

Coordinator and assistant coordinator of special projects were hired.

Employee performance reviews were conducted with 25 factors rated for each individual. The reviews serve to benefit the organization, supervisor, and employee since they require objective evaluation of each employee's performance and potential while discussing individual strengths and weaknesses on a person-to-person basis.

SEPTEMBER

Staff member attended a six-class course on EFFECTIVE PRESENTATIONS sponsored by the State Department of Community Affairs.

Staff member received a B.A. degree in Human Services from the University Without Walls.

OCTOBER

Two staff members attended a conference CRISIS IN OUR CITIES in Detroit, Michigan sponsored by the International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies.

Staff member attended a workshop on PROPOSAL WRITING, Title I, Higher Education Act of 1965 sponsored by Rhode Island College.

NOVEMBER

Staff member attended a six-class course on PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS sponsored by the State Department of Community Affairs.

JANUARY

Staff member attended a workshop on WOMEN IN BUSINESS sponsored by the Small Business Administration.

APRIL

Two staff members attended a FAIR HOUSING CONFERENCE in Washington, D.C. sponsored by the National Committee Against Discrimination in Housing and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The Conference focused on the observance of the tenth anniversary of the passage of Title VIII.

MAY

The Chairman and the Executive Director of the Commission attended an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)/Fair Employment Practices Commissions (FEPC) Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico. PHRC was asked to voice its opinion as a non-enforcement agency on a position paper developed by EEOC. PHRC was the only such agency invited to attend.

PHRC hosted the Atlantic Regional Conference of the International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies (IAOHRA).

JUNE

Staff member attended a workshop on FOOD STAMP REGULATIONS sponsored by the Community Affairs Commission of the Diocese of Providence.

Staff member attended a workshop on WELFARE REFORM sponsored by the Diocese of Providence.

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The goal of the Public Relations Division is a well-known and well thought of Commission i.e. a public that is informed of the Commission's goals and ideals. Publications, public contact and community coordination are the three divisional functions which are employed to reach this end. PHRC has established a sound working relationship with the media in Providence and has succeeded in gaining media time and space for the dissemination of its ideology and announcement of its activities. To supplement media coverage PHRC has developed and distributed printed materials.

This year Commission members have:

- regularly appeared as guests on radio and television programs.
- continued to host the Commission's radio program, CONTACT, aired on WPRO. The program began as COMMISSION TALK in 1976 and is aired the third Sunday of each month.
- frequently prepared news releases, editorial comments and public service announcements.
- published a newsletter quarterly.

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MARCH

PHRC's Department of Community Relations compiled a list of names of those who serve on Authorities, Boards, Commissions, Committees and as Department Heads for the City of Providence. This information will be used to determine the number of minority group members and women in policy making positions in City government.

PHRC translated into Spanish materials for the Department of Planning and Urban Development and the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation.

APRIL

PHRC sponsored a bowler in a Bowl-A-Thon for the benefit of the Rhode Island School for the Deaf.

Two PHRC staff members registered Spanish speaking residents to vote and translated information into Spanish concerning registration requirements.

JUNE

The Executive Director of PHRC was named Chairperson of the Recruitment and Placement Committee of the Governor's Summer Jobs Council. The primary objective of this program, now in its tenth year of operation, is to place young people in jobs in the private sector which may not be attractive to the adult work force due to their temporary nature. By midsummer 581 youths were placed in jobs.

PLANS FOR THE COMING YEAR INCLUDE:

A conference for next February, PROMISE AND BETRAYAL: THE KERNER COMMISSION REPORT TEN YEARS AFTER. In 1968 the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, better known as the Kerner Commission, reported "White Racism" as the major cause of the nation's racial disturbances. The conference is an attempt to assess the country's progress towards a more equal and united society since the report was issued ten years ago and to arrive at a public consensus on the propriety of such programs as affirmative action.

Also planned for October is a conference on NEW TRENDS IN POLICE/COMMUNITY RELATIONS. Cosponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice, the conference is designed to develop recommendations which can help police and city administrators reduce the rate of violence between police and civilians.

CLASSIFICATION	RESOLUTION				
	Pending	Dismissed	Conciliated	Referred	Total
Education	4	4	102	2	112
Employment	17	21	110	23	171
Housing	0	4	16	13	33
Police	14	20	38	6	78
Other	5	6	19	8	38
Total	40	55	285	52	432

CASE BREAKDOWN ACCORDING TO RACE AND ETHNICITY

Black	272
White	126
Hispanic	26
Other	8
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Total	432

EDUCATION cases involve a PHRC staff member acting as representative for public school students at disciplinary hearings. This service is provided to insure that each student is informed of his rights and responsibilities and that due process is observed. It is part of an ongoing effort to reduce the rate of suspensions and expulsions of minority youths from public schools.

EMPLOYMENT cases include but are not limited to:

- mediating disputes between employer and employee
- assisting clients to secure employment
- representing clients whose unemployment benefits have been denied by the Department of Employment Security (D.E.S.)

This year as a result of PHRC representation before the D.E.S. Board of Review, our clients recieved more than \$7,000 in retroactive unemployment benefits. In addition, over 100 clients were placed in jobs in both the public and private sector.

POLICE cases originate with the intake of civilian complaints against members of the Providence Police Department -- a procedure established in 1973 after a consent judgement by Judge Pettine. A PHRC staff member is authorized to investigate the complaint and to represent the client at a hearing. Witnesses are examined and evidence is presented before a hearing officer who subsequently issues findings of fact to the personnel bureau and to the complainant. If the complainant is dissatisfied, he may appeal for a new hearing.

HOUSING cases conciliated at PHRC deal mainly with tenant/landlord disputes. In those involving an emergency situation such as evictions, clients are informed of their rights and referred to an attorney.

OTHER: This category includes a variety of miscellaneous community services such as translations, health and welfare assistance and aiding aliens in establishing their citizenship.

REFERRALS: This year over 1500 persons have been referred to the Rhode Island Commission For Human Rights and other similar agencies either because the problem had occurred outside PHRC's jurisdiction or because after investigation probable cause had been found.

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Nov 20 1 40 PM '78

DEPT. OF CITY CLERK
PROVIDENCE, R.I.

