

FLORIDA COUNCIL ON THE SOCIAL STATUS OF BLACK MEN AND BOYS

September 8, 2011 MEETING MINUTES

A Quarterly Meeting of the Florida Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys was held on September 8, 2011 at the Crown Plaza Riverfront Hotel Jacksonville, Florida.

Council Members Present:

Eddy Regnier, Chair
Albert Simpson, Vice Chair
Shila Salem, 1st Vice Chair
Ron Henderson, 2nd Vice Chair
Franklin Adderley
Argatha Gilmore
Ben Shirley, Jr.
Andre Smith
Matthew Gregory
Gary Siplin
William Hardin
Lois Scott
Perry Thurston
Stephen Wise

Council Members Absent:

Gypsy Gallardo
Robert Woody
John Davis

First Agenda Item: Welcome

Chairman Regnier welcomed everyone to the meeting in Jacksonville Florida. Thereafter he made the request for roll call.

Second Agenda Item: Roll Call

Roll call was executed by Council staff Tawanna Leven-Forbes.

Third Agenda Item: Opening Invocation

Chief Argatha Gilmore gave the invocation.

Fourth Agenda Item: Call to Order

Chairman Regnier called the meeting to order at 9:22 am. The agenda was adopted as posted.

Fifth Agenda Item: Chairman's Comments

Chairman Regnier talked about the Council's focus on African American's boys and men. He talked about how the Council was created to help men and boys flourish. Thereafter, Chairman Regnier opened the floor for member comments.

Sixth Agenda Item: Member Comments

There were no comments from Council members; Chairman Regnier moved to the next agenda item for the adoption of the outstanding meeting minutes.

Seventh Agenda Item: Adoption of Outstanding Minutes

The meeting minutes were adopted and approved with corrections noted for May 18 by Senator Siplin and Chief Gilmore. Chairman Regnier moved to the next agenda item 1st vice chair nomination and voting.

Eighth Agenda Item: 1st Vice Chair Nomination & Voting

Chairman Regnier opened the floor to the nomination of persons for the seat of 1st vice chair. Council member Lois Scott nominated Shelia Salem for 1st vice chair. Ms. Salem accepted the nomination. Chairman Regnier asked for additional nominations and there were none. The Council voted unanimously for Ms. Salem to take the seat of 1st vice chair. Chairman Regnier announced Ms. Salem as 1st vice chair for the Florida Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys.

Ninth Agenda Item: Review of the Council's Mission

Chairman Regnier talked about the mission of the Council for clarity for the new appointee's. He covered the Mission, Vision, Meetings, Discussion, Research, Annual Report and Recommendations.

Sen. Siplin talked about the due date of the Annual Report and the need to get the Council's recommendations to the legislature. He stated that the Florida Legislature committee week will commence in a couple of weeks, and will meet each month which will involve budget. Sen. Siplin said that he set on the education budget, high education, PreK-12 as well as the overall budget for the state of Florida. He said even though the final report of the Council is not due until December 15 he hope that the Council would commence to have some sub-goals that need to be met and get this information in his hands as well as the hands of Senator Wise and Representative Thurston to take to their colleagues to talk about how we can provide some funding to meet the needs of the Council. Sen. Siplin stated that they are talking about including the lives of black men and boys and the difficulty in the economy in getting medical treatment; also there is a need to focus on young boy's attire which imposes an impression on who they meet.

Chairman Regnier thanked Senator Siplin for his suggestions and stated that he will take him up on his offer in getting the Council's agenda heard.

Representative Thurston questioned Senator Siplin about what happens and what could the teachers do if the kids come to school with their pants sagging?"

Sen. Siplin stated that if kids go to school with their pants sagging the first offense would include the principle talking to the student and the parent or guardian; the second offense would include the principle talking to the student, the parent or guardian and the student will be written up and receive a five day suspension from extra-curricular activity; the third offense would include the principle talking to the student, the parent or guardian, a thirty day suspension from extra-curricular activities and three days in school suspension.

Mr. Smith talked about the Council allowing the Annual Report to drive the mission and not allowing the mission to drive the Council. He said that updates of the recommendations that have been made in the Annual Report should be looked at and the Council should focus on the recommendation that is made by guest speakers and how they could be implemented.

Rev. Simpson stated that the Council is fortunate to have policymakers serve on the Council which will give the Council more opportunity to talk directly to them, moving the agenda and getting it into policy.

Rep. Thruston stated that in being a policymaker he think the Council should focus on the Annual Report, but didn't think that the Annual Report should be the main focus and the driving force of the Council.

Chairman Regnier agreed with Mr. Smith and Rep. Thurston and said that the Council should go about getting information for the Annual Report but think of it as a vehicle promoting the ideas and to make sure it get to the elected officials.

Chief Gilmore talked about sending out invitations to agencies to meet with the Council and ask that they bring with them statistics with them so that the Council and the agencies can work together.

Andre Smith talked about speakers coming in and not having enough time to cover their material because after having several invites to present and questions asked there was not enough time for other questions.

Lois Scott talked about how important it is to bring in speakers and using their support to identify and address issues of black men and boys.

Chairman Regnier talked about the Council needing to follow through keeping ideas and recommendations alive.

Rep. Thurston talked about inconsistency in the Council with its member's and changes in agencies that causes the inconsistency. He said that the Council need to make sure the agencies are accounted for in the Council.

Sen. Siplin talked about using the resources of the Black Caucus. He suggested that someone from the Council should go to each Black Caucus meeting and advance, negotiate and make sure that the budget request for the Council is incorporated.

Chairman Regneir questioned Sen. Siplin on how a member of the Council should go about getting on the agenda of the Black Caucus to attend meetings.

Sen. Siplin suggested that the Council contact Mr. LaMarr, Executive Director of the Black Caucus and he would get the Council on the agenda.

Lois Scott stated that the Council should make sure that the members of the Black Caucus know what the Council goals are.

Chairman Regnier moved to the next agenda item.

Tenth Agenda Item: Guest Speakers

Chairman Regnier welcomed guest speakers Katherine Burns, Director of JREC and Dr. Cassandra Bush, Executive Director of THORMINC. He thanked them for coming to share with the Council and opened the floor to guest speaker Ms. Burns.

- **Ms. Katherine Burns, Director of JREC**

Ms. Burns talked about the mission of the Jacksonville Re-Entry Center (JREC) and Jacksonville's plan for Crime Prevention. She stated that the mission of JREC is to successfully reintegrate former felony offenders by providing holistic direct services including case management to promote their opportunities to become productive members of the community to reduce recidivism and increase public safety. Ms. Burns talked about the funding of the program which is a \$600,000 budget through the city of Jacksonville. She talked about who is eligible and how the program works. Ms. Burns stated that those that are eligible to come through JREC are the offenders who have been charged with felony convictions that are in state facilities for one year and a day,

and those that have been in local county facilities for six months. She explained ways offenders could be informed about the program via letter or by facility staff. Ms. Burns talked about the difference in the way recidivism rates is counted in Duval County vs. the Florida Department of Corrections (DOC). She said that DOC counts recidivism by getting arrested for committing new crimes verses Duval county counting recidivism by getting arrested for loitering.

- **Dr. Cassandra Bush, Executive Director, THORMINC**

Dr. Bush talked about The House of Refuse Ministries, Inc (THORMINC) saying that it was initially originated in 1999 by her husband Pastor Jacob Bush saying that THORMINC is a 501c3/non-profit organization. She stated the THORMINC is now operating under a program “Resolved to Stop the Violence Project” (RSVP). Dr. Bush said that the mission of THORMINC is to provide supportive housing and services through individuals in need. She stated that she specializes in working with violent offenders, those who are mentally ill and those who are to the point of being terminally ill. Dr. Bush said that the vision is to provide structured living environment with wrap around services as individual’s reserves progress towards wholeness and self efficiency. She talked about the housing process and the 90% success rate. Dr. Bush stated that THORMINC is contracted through the Department of Corrections.

Ms. Scott talked about being a supporter of ex-offender and applauded Dr. Bush on her program.

Rev. Simpson thanked Dr. Bush for sharing with the Council. He complimented Dr. Bush on the great things she is doing in the City of Jacksonville.

Rep. Thurston thanked Dr. Bush for coming and sharing with the Council.

Chief Frank Adderley questioned Dr. Bush about possible problems that she may have from residence of the community bout the THORMINC facilities and are there residences with community boundaries.

Dr. Bush stated that she goes into the communities and talks with residence to see what are the needs of that community. She said that she ask those that live in the community if they mind THORMINC being there, but also share with the residence that she is bringing law enforcement with her.

Eleventh Agenda Item: Public Comments

Chairman Regnier opened the floor to public comments. Council member asked several questions to Ms. Burns about JREC. Chairman Regnier asked Dr. Bush to explain the non-profit organization that she request help from the Council.

Dr. Bush explain that tax credit is when businesses pay their taxes through the state of Florida and dollars are there that can be sent to places like THORMINC or an organization that encourages employability etc. She stated that the process could take six months to a year saying that the process is very lengthy.

Rev. Simpson stated that the process of a tax certificate is lengthy, but is a good process. He stated that he would help Dr. Bush in the processing of getting THORMINC’s tax certificate.

Twelfth Agenda Item: Updates

- **Orlando Meeting**
 - **Thursday, November 17, 2011; 9:00am – 5:00pm business meeting at the Buena Vista Palace, Lake Buena Vista, FL**
 - **Friday, November 18, 2011; 9:00am – 2:00pm business meeting in the community**
- **Status of New Appointees**
 - **Deputy Robert Woody, Department of Juvenile Justice**
 - **John Davie, Department of Children and Families**
 - **Chief Franklin Adderley, Ft. Lauderdale Police Department**
- **Commitment Letter**
 - **A statement from each member is needed to inform the Council of the intentions of the individual**

Chairman Regnier thanked Ms. Sandra Parker of the Jacksonville Urban League for coming and asked that she give directions to the Jacksonville Urban League for Friday, September 9, 2011 Public Forum from 9:00am – 12:00pm.

Thirteenth Agenda Item: Sub-Committee Meeting Break-Out

Chairman Regnier stated that he would like the groups to get an outline for the Annual Report and get an idea for a couple of goals that the Council can focus on.

- **Criminal Justice & Gangs and Health & Families committee's met from 2:30pm – 3:30pm**
 - **Discussions were carried out to gather information for the Annual Report**
- **Education and Employment & Economics Committee's met from 3:30pm – 4:30pm**
 - **Discussions were carried out to gather information for the Annual Report**

Fourteenth Agenda Item: Subcommittee's Report

Chairman Regnier asked for a representative from the Criminal Justice and Gangs Sub-Committee (CJG) to give its report.

Ms. Shila Salem served as representative for the CJG sub-committee and stated that it was decided by the committee to advance the following recommendations as the focal points of the Committee: 1. The Civil Citation program; 2. Unsupervised repeat offender population; 3. Re-Entry to further advance the program; 4. Teen Summit - Florida Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys host a summit practicing the grass roots efforts in the communities, possibly pairing up with the *National Conference on Preventing Crime in the Black Community* which will take place in Tampa, Florida May 16-17, 2012. She stated that the Council should consider adopting the idea of hosting a Teen Summit on May 15, 2012.

Chairman Regnier asked for a representative from the Education Sub-Committee (Ed.) to give its report.

Mr. Andre Smith, chair of Ed. sub-committee stated that it was decided by the committee that the focal points to consider for recommendations are as follows: 1. Occupational Certification; 2. Review all educational policies and their effectiveness; 3. Department of Education updating Data on its website by race and gender; 4. Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) adding components that deal with school districts and low performing students graduating and getting through the system.

Senator Wise talked about the inputs and not outcomes helping the minority group's graduate.

Chairman Regnier asked for a representative from the Employment & Economic Sub-Committee (Employ. & Eco.) to give its report.

Ms. Lois Scott, chair of Employ. & Eco. stated that it was decided by the committee that the focal points to consider for recommendations are as follows: 1. The support of prison reform that will reduce recidivism; 3. Promote economic development initiative to improve the outcome of black men and boys that will (expand tax credits, increased vocational training, identify state revenue programs to promote youth programs and improved information for access to the programs that are available.)

Chairman Regnier, chair of Hlth. & Fam. committee stated that there has been an increased percentage rate of AID's in young black men that it has become an epidemic. He said that it was decided by the committee that the focal points to consider for recommendations are as follows: 1. Comprehensive sex education; 2. Nutrition and Exercise education

Fifteenth Agenda Item: Discussion of Annual Report

Chairman Regnier stated that it was suggested that the Council to complete the AR as early as November 2011 and use it as a platform to promote the recommendations of the Council. He stated that in 2012 the focus of completing the AR should be in the first three months of the year; and use the remainder of the year to promote the recommendations and the ideas that was discovered. Chairman Regnier said that he will encourage the members to put all ideas on paper and forward it to Ms. Leven-Forbes so he can review them.

Sen. Siplin stated that money that is requested from the state of Florida should be submitted early November. He said that if the Council is requesting a budget it should be made early in the year because the group will be going into Committee Week and bills that deals with money will be discussed and money set aside.

Chairman Regnier stated that the Councils webpage need the funds to update the website so that it could be more users friendly to the public with links to the Health Department, Education Department and more which will benefit the mission of the Council. He stated that money is a problem because the Council does not have the funds to do what is needed.

Rep. Thurston stated that the Council needs to look at the budget for the Council in general. He said that it is very important to have a sufficient amount of money to maintain both staff and things needed to accomplish the goals of the Council.

Sen. Siplin asked what is the budget for the Council and who divides it.

Chairman Regnier opened the floor to Rick Nuss.

Mr. Nuss stated that the Council's budget is fifty thousand dollars which includes the salary for staff and other operational expenses. He stated that the previous chairman divided the Councils' budget. Mr. Nuss said that the chairman should submit a budget to him so he can submit it to the appropriate people in the Attorney General's office and then it is submitted to the Legislature.

Sen. Siplin stated that the budget should be submitted to him or Rep. Thurston.

Rep. Thurston stated that the budget request is going backwards and not being put in the hands it should be in. He said that the Council should do better by the Council staff as well as other needs of the Council.

Sen. Siplin wanted to know if staff had been lost due to the Councils budget cut.

Mr. Nuss stated that the Council had not lost staff since the budget had been cut but because the position is an OPS position the Council cannot keep staff.

Chairman Regnier stated that the OPS staff position should be a permanent position.

Sen. Siplin stated that if the Council cannot keep its staff then it would put the chairman at a disadvantage. He said that the Council must have a sound foundation so that all new appointees can be abreast of the Council and its past. Sen. Siplin said that a budget should be submitted that is needed to accomplish the goals of the Council.

Rep. Thurston stated that the Council needs full time staff with benefits along with other changes to the budget.

Sen. Siplin stated that his only constitutional obligation as a state Senator is to do the budget for the state of Florida. He asks that Chairman Regnier submit his desired budget to include staff salary to him and Rep. Thurston and he will make it a priority for the Black Caucus.

Rev. Simpson stated that the Council started off with a larger budget with the intentions of making the staff position a full time position with benefits and has lost a great deal of talent due to the staff position being an OPS position. He asked Mr. Nuss that once the position becomes a full-time career service position who will this staff be governed under.

Mr. Nuss stated that as long as the program is housed in the Attorney General's office the staff person in the full-time career service position will be under his supervision.

Chairman Regnier stated that he will get with Rick Nuss to meet about the budget and submit the budget to Sen. Siplin and Rep. Thurston for the Black Caucus to review.

Sen. Siplin suggested that Chairman Regnier make recommendations to the four presidents of the historical Black Colleges to advise them of the Councils responsibilities and to solicit recommendations from them regarding input of what their studies revile which should improve what the Council is doing to achieve its goals. He said ultimately what the Council does will improve the historical Black Colleges client base. Sen. Siplin stated that this recommendation should be a request from the Council.

Sen. Wise stated that he will began hearings between now and January on a bill that deals with the incarceration in Juvenile Justice and to change what they are doing in education in the Juvenile facilities in the state of Florida. He stated that he would like the Council to testify before the Committee to review the bill; he would like to hear from the people out in the field to hear their input; it's a major piece of Legislation.

Chairman Regnier agreed with Sen. Siplin and moved to the next agenda item.

Sixteenth Agenda Item: For the Good of the Order

Chairman Regnier said that when the Council has leadership from elected officials the Council shines and without them the Council flounder; in using their wisdom, knowledge and influence the Council will flourish.

He thanked Ms. Scott, Mr. Nuss and Ms. Leven-Forbes for showing leadership and giving valued information in helping him with decision making.

Adjournment

Chairman Regnier asked for a motion for adjournment. Mr. Shirley motioned that the meeting be adjourned; Chief Gilmore seconded the adjournment. Chairman Regnier declared the meeting adjourned.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:24 p.m.

