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Funds Shortage Curtails Mission

The newly formed Vermont Human Rights Commission announced recently that due to funding problems and lack of investigators, only complaints of discrimination that are illegal under existing laws will be investigated. For Vermont gays and lesbians, Jim Morgan, a commission member explained, this means complaints reported to the Commission will be tabulated for statistical purposes, but can not be investigated.

Morgan added that Susan Sussman, Executive Director of the Commission, strongly urged those with complaints to call anyway.

Vermont Humans Rights Commission
828-2480
P.O. Box 997
Montpelier, VT 05602

Register your complaints of discrimination based upon sexual orientation. Calls will be logged for statistical purposes but not investigated.

The Commission's first public hearing was held at City Hall in Burlington on December 7th. The topic was housing discrimination and 14 people offered testimony. Most of those speaking cited problems in obtaining rental housing because of their dependence on public assistance or because the applicant had children.

Two housing advocates mentioned receiving complaints regarding discrimination based on sexual orientation. Liz Cum, a city housing inspector, discussed three cases of discrimination in housing based on sexual orientation.

FYI: Burlington Voters

Burlington mayoral candidates, Peter Clavelle, Nancy Chioffi, Sandra Baird and Michael Hackett went on record regarding lesbian and gay civil rights Thursday, February 16 at a debate sponsored by the Burlington Women's Council. Clavelle and Baird supported the need for lesbian and gay civil rights laws most strongly. Hackett seemed not to understand the full extent of the issue and dismissed it as "Let's go the whole nine yards." Chioffi was the only candidate that was against a civil rights law for lesbians and gay men. She said that she thought that there was no need for separate laws, citing the protections already provided for underneath the constitution.

W.V.P.R. Update: Tune in March 4

W.V.P.R has apparently agreed to broadcast a day sponsorship message from a listener which was originally rejected because they deemed it controversial, presumably because of its reference to gays and lesbians. March 4 is the day the message will air.

The listener, Hugh Russell of Marlboro, said he spoke with VPR Development Director Sandy Northrop in December. She agreed to accept the sponsorship for a Saturday in January - providing the wording was changed.

Russell had originally requested that the sponsorship read, "This day of programming is brought to you in part by our gay and lesbian friends in Vermont." Together with VPR, he agreed it would read instead, "...by Hugh Russell and Charles Bedard for their gay and lesbian friends in Vermont." The point perhaps being, ac-

ording to Russell, that "WE can have gay and lesbian friends but THEY don't necessarily have to."

In January, however, Russell received another call saying the sponsorship had missed the printing deadline for the VPR magazine. The agreed upon wording had also been misplaced. They settled on March 4. Russell says he has not yet received any official confirmation other than his cancelled check.

He added that in response to copies of his correspondence with VPR sent to the Governor's office, he received three replies, two from Governor Kunin herself. She encouraged him to file a complaint with the Vermont Human Rights Commission, which unfortunately, would provide little remedy in light of the Commission's decision not to investigate such complaints.

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