

Minutes of the Champaign County ACLU Steering Committee

Thursday, Oct 10, 2013

Room 3403 Siebel Center

Present: Steve Portnoy, president, Mort Brussel, Bob Illyes, Carol Leff, Mark Leff, Diana Lenik, Marilyn Lindholm, Esther Patt, Carol Spindel, Shirley Stillinger, Marsha Woodbury

1. Minutes of the September 5 were approved

Immediately prior to the October meeting, steering committee members met with the relevant campus police staff to be informed about their policies and practices on the use of surveillance cameras on campus. The campus currently has some 1000 security cameras, almost all of them in buildings at the request of specific campus units (and paid for by those units). The small number of external cameras tend to be used for monitoring of areas that can be highly congested (around the stadium, for example). A temporary external camera installed in campus town was said to have proved useful and has been retained. The cities of Champaign and Urbana do not have non-traffic cameras (although a number of private businesses do) so there is currently no city policy on surveillance cameras, but the university has a developed policy that stipulates where and how cameras can be used, the restrictions on access to the monitoring film (including a computerized activity log that permits monitoring of how the material is accessed) and the use of material in criminal proceedings where necessary. Unless or until city policies are articulated and can be coordinated with University policy there are limits to cross-unit cooperation. Most of the cameras (there are 1000 after all) are not monitored in real time, but can be reviewed in the event of need. We were shown film (redacted to disguise identity) illustrative of the type of incident for which camera evidence can prove useful in identifying suspects or potentially clearing others. Over all, those present from the ACLU were appreciative of the opportunity to better understand the system now in place, and were encouraged that fairly comprehensive policies have been articulated to govern the operation of the surveillance system. We were assured that we could return with subsequent questions about the system.

2. Announcements & Communications

a. Marriage Equality Law: March in Springfield on Tuesday October 22, noon to 4:30

Allie Carter, Advocacy and Outreach Director at the ACLU Chicago office expressed more optimism about a path to passage despite the complexities of the fall veto session. Allie also urged participation of local chapters in the Marriage Equality March in Springfield on October 22 (the first day of the fall session), offered to provide lunch for those who come, and also encouraged members to volunteer for the Illinois United for Marriage phone bank.

We agreed to put notice of these events and opportunities to volunteer on the listserv announce.

A contingent from the Champaign County ACLU will be going to the March: possible participants from the steering committee are Steve, Esther, Bill and Richard.

b. The annual Unity March will take place on October 12, with the collection point at 205 W. Park. One mobilizing issue is the Bristol Place (in Bristol Park) tenancy question. The city of Champaign's redevelopment plans include the razing of the existing housing on the site and building of a new complex, which has aroused considerable concern and some conflicting interests in the neighborhood. Esther Patt has been working on the issue and reported on its complexities. The planning process is officially due to start in late October, but Esther noted it wasn't clear how open the options actually were, that is, whether the core of the development plan wasn't already fixed in the minds of city planners.

3. Old Business

a. Fall gathering. Allie Carter offered electronic advertising and an online site for payment and contributions. We appreciated the offer, and agreed to have her set up this payment system as a convenience. With time and place set (at the home of Carol Spindel and Tom Bassett, 5-7), we made a rough distribution of commitments to food provision. Committee members were encouraged to bring a friend!

b. Racial profiling in traffic stops. Allie made it clear that the Chicago office is interested in this issue and would be prepared to offer legal assistance in the event, for example, of a challenge to current traffic stop practice.

There will be an Urbana City Council study session on the traffic stop issue in November.

c. Bob Illyes reported on the discussion at the Progressive Potluck organized by (long-time ACLU member) Pat Simpson. The steering committee welcomed the proposal of an on-line calendar of local events to improve coordination and avoid duplication.

5. Adjournment

Next meeting: Nov 7, 3405 Siebel Center, 7PM