



**INDIANA FAITH-BASED ADVISORY COUNCIL**  
**Revised Meeting Minutes**

April 11, 2006  
1:00 PM – 3:15 PM

**Indianapolis Marriott Downtown**  
**350 West Maryland Street**  
**Indianapolis, Indiana**

The second meeting of the Indiana Faith-Based Advisory Council was called to order at 1:35 PM. Those council members in attendance were:

Jerry Alexander	Curt Smith
Joan Andrews	Glenn Tebbe
Rick George	Mark Teike
Joseph Gibson	Maria Thompson
Merideth Holloway	Laverna Truitt
Dennis Sasso	

Everyone was asked to introduce themselves by giving their name and organization. Executive Director Paula Parker-Sawyers indicated that in order to stay on schedule with the scheduling of the quarterly meetings, this one happened to fall in the middle of our 2006 Governor's Conference on Service and Volunteerism. The OFBCI is aware this is in the middle of Holy Week and indicated some of the board members were unable to attend because of this. We will be looking at dates for next year's conference that do not conflict with any major holidays.

Paula Parker-Sawyers introduced Lt. Governor Becky Skillman and thanked her for requesting to come to visit with the members of the Council. Lt. Governor Skillman thanked the committee for being a partner in caring for more than 6 million Hoosiers. She indicated she has traveled to all 92 counties and saw incredible work being done. The Governor's Office is aware of the significant challenges in the communities and the Lt. Governor is so impressed with the quality of programs and the addressing of the many, many needs. She also mentioned that Indiana had 91,000 more jobs than last year. She and the Governor are working hard to ensure businesses grow and stay in Indiana.

Indiana now has an Office of Community and Rural Affairs which is the first time Indiana has had this type office. The purpose of this office is to spend more time with elected officials and community leaders to help them create and maintain stable jobs in their areas. She also indicated Indiana was the only state who had a 10-year fully funded project (with the actual money in the bank to pay for it) and we should see an economic boom because all of the highway projects will begin around the same time. Lt. Governor Skillman opened the floor for a brief question and answer period.

Rabbi Sasso asked about the public prayer issue in the legislature. Lt. Governor Skillman agreed with him that this was a sensitive issue. **Rabbi Sasso indicated he was quite disappointed and embarrassed by the House's leadership public defiance of the Federal judge's ruling and their efforts to circumvent it. Furthermore, he suggested the Governor's office help to provide a voice of wisdom and moderation that would speak against the exploitation of religion for ideological and political purposes.** The Lt. Governor indicated the House operates independently and that the House chose to proceed separately on this issue.

Hispanic Latino affairs was raised as an area of concern by Maria Thompson. Ms. Thompson asked Lt. Governor Skillman if the Governor would like some broad base research done, based on a recent newspaper article. The Lt. Governor indicated they would be very much interested in such research. The OFBCI will arrange a meeting to start identifying issues; serve as a facilitator and then direct the project to the appropriate agency.

Following the Lt. Governor's departure, Executive Director Paula Parker-Sawyers spoke about the Conference preparations since the last IFBAC meeting. The conference had an attendance of over 700 registrants and about 20 to 25 percent of them represent faith-based organizations. She expressed confidence that there was representation from across the state among the participants. She highlighted conference topics and shared a more detailed description of the Governor's Awards Dinner with speaker Jim Towey. The initial evaluations of the conference were very good.

OFBCI, HUD and DOC conducted a workshop reference Assets for Independence. During that workshop, Dave Liebel and John Rentsch came up with an idea to establish Individual Development Accounts (IDA) for offenders after they are released. This type of program isn't offered anywhere else in the US. Over 16,000 offenders will be released over the next year in the State of Indiana. The Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority is writing a Housing Assistance Program Grant which will provide 18 month rental assistance for offenders while they are in the work release program. The proposed IDA project would be in conjunction with Goodwill and the Department of Work Force Development and would move the offenders along the path to full self-sufficiency through education, the purchase of a home, or starting a small business.

Executive Director Parker-Sawyers then addressed a matter involving the OFBCI and ISCASA's event on April 29<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Parker-Sawyers agreed to be a speaker at this event,

which is for adolescent girls to help prevent sexual assault, but did not read carefully the request that also wanted the OFBCI to serve as a sponsor of the program. She indicated that under normal circumstances the sponsorship of a program of this type would not be an issue. However, the wording of the brochure indicating OFBCI's sponsorship has a clear "Christian" message. As such, the wording is in conflict with the OFBCI's commitment to remain neutral in matters of religion since the OFBCI is part of state government and is publicly financed. She advised that because of the biased wording this partnership threatens the integrity of the office and does not represent all of our communities. Ms. Parker-Sawyers clearly stated there weren't any state dollars or other money involved and is sincerely concerned about the impression this made and the fact this places OFBCI in an uncomfortable position.

As a result of this, she asked the Council for their advice. Ideas about developing a policy were discussed. Currently the OFBCI has a 'speaker engagement' form that is sent to those asking for the executive director's participation in an event. It was discussed that the confirmation form could include a requirement that any promotional materials must be submitted to OFBCI for approval before distribution. There was also a suggestion that INCASA and possibly the OFBCI put on their website a disclaimer with reference to this event that indicates that no tax dollars were used to support the particular event promoted by the brochure.

The executive director advised that OFBCI would draft a policy and send to the IFBAC board (with a time certain) for feedback. Following this, they will receive it back a second time within the next 30 days. The board was asked to read it critically.

The Council then turned to the other items on the agenda. The first topic on the agenda was the question of a leadership structure for the council. It was discussed to specify what types of committees were needed, (if any) and that it should be the executive director's discretion to appoint a chair and/or vice chair. The council advised they are here to assist OFBCI but as an advisory group, not a task group. As such, council members did not see any added value at this time to having a leadership structure.

The second topic discussed was the need for subcommittees. After some discussion, it was decided that the OFBCI staff should draft suggested committee descriptions for the council to review and determine which ones most interest them. Council members will select the committee upon which they would want to volunteer based on their own interest and time availability.

The last topic discussed was a proposed handbook for non-profit organizations. A summary of Chapter 1, "Handbook for Indiana Faith-Based and Community Organizations" was distributed for review. The OFBCI and the Secretary of State are working together to create this handbook for people who want to serve their community. Suggestions were made to possibly change the title of the handbook, to make the print larger, making it more user friendly, and to include frequently asked questions. This project is going to take at least six months to prepare to ensure accuracy and validity.

Discussion regarding the next meeting scheduled for July 25, 2006, as well as the possible location of that meeting, was the final item of the meeting. Executive Director Parker-Sawyers advised we would poll the board about the upcoming July 25<sup>th</sup> meeting date due to several anticipated absences. Joan Andrews advised the council that Nappanee would be more than happy to host an upcoming IFBAC meeting. Some members expressed concern about moving the meeting away from Indianapolis. It was noted that Indianapolis is located centrally and is equally convenient for those persons from outside of Indianapolis.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet Simpson, Administrative Assistant  
Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives