

Officials respond to charges of discrimination

Editor's Note: The Bristol Bay Times recently published an article in which charges of racial discrimination by the Dillingham Police Department were raised. In addition, the Tundra Times printed an editorial on this subject. Following is a response by the Dillingham officials.

by the Dillingham Police Dept.
for the Tundra Times

The Alaska State Commission on Human Rights has ended its investigation of the Dillingham Police Department.

The investigation began when the commission's investigator Kimberly Martus arrived unannounced in Dillingham in mid-April with a subpoena for documents.

She also wished to interview employees of the Dillingham Police Department.

City Manager Jeff Lebahn and Dillingham Police Chief Glenn Herbst immediately stopped work on all other projects and completely cooperated with the commission in its investigation, spending considerable time

gathering documents and rendering assistance to the commission's investigator.

Such complaints of discrimination are brought anonymously, and nothing has been learned as to what motivation brought the issue into question.

The city made arrangements with the commission's investigator to visit Dillingham a second time to interview Police Department employees.

The city arranged work schedules to allow Martus to speak with each employee who was in Dillingham. The city brought Kathy Anderson, an employment law paralegal with the City Attorney's Office, to Dillingham on May 5 to assist in an independent investigation of the matter and to work with the commission's investigator in her endeavors.

City Attorney Fred Arvidson met with the City Council in executive session on May 7 to update the council on the investigation. The City Council was very interested in determining whether there was any substance to the allegations and, if so, what remedies were available.

The commission has determined that a formal complaint will not be issued,

Dillingham Police Department

Dillingham, Alaska

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and the case is closed.

The results of the investigation have been positive. For one thing, several specific suggestions have been made as to how the city can improve its communication of its nondiscrimination policy.

The Police Department also plans to conduct cross-cultural training.

The investigation has also highlighted recurring difficulties in the ability of the city to deal with "Title 47" cases — persons taken into protective custody due to intoxication — because of the overcrowded condition of public safety facilities.

Chief Herbst would like to "thank all of our citizens for cooperating with the Human Rights Commission in its investigation by lending the department support and providing information about our (alcohol) problems here in Dillingham." He said he appreciated the "dedication of the officers in handling our problem in a humane way."

The department and the city are dedicated to reaffirm their commitment to provide a nondiscriminatory delivery of public services in Dillingham and to provide care for those who need our assistance.