



DELIBERATIVE FORUM MEETING

**Monday, November 7, 2016
CCAC Homewood-Brushton Center
6:00 – 8:00 p.m.**

I. DELIBERATIVE FORUM OPENING STATEMENT

Director Carlos Torres welcomed participants and explained the work of the Commission as a law enforcement agency of Civil Rights in the City of Pittsburgh. Director Torres stated that the purpose of the deliberative forum was to gather information from the community about issues faced by the public in regard to discrimination. Director Torres emphasized that this was the beginning of a longer conversation, and that the Commission would provide a report of the issues discussed within ninety (90) days of the meeting.

Director Torres explained that the community members would participate in discussion groups led by Commissioners. Following discussions, a volunteer from each table would read out the main points of the group's conversation. He also informed participants that there would be a survey at the end of the meeting and he encouraged participants to complete the survey. Director Torres introduced the Commission's Solicitors to provide an overview of the laws and practices that govern the Commission.

II. EXPERT PANEL INTRODUCTIONS & PRESENTATION

Commission Solicitor Mark Hamilton provided an overview of employment discrimination. Commission Housing Solicitor Jeff Ruder provided an overview of housing discrimination.

III. TABLE DISCUSSIONS

Participants split into six discussion groups led by Commissioners at approximately 6:10p.m.

IV. GROUP DISCUSSION AND REPORT OUTS

All participants reconvened at approximately 7:20p.m. to review the discussions from each table. Commissioner Craig welcomed participants back and encouraged them to contact the Commission if there were any questions regarding discrimination. The

Commissioner stated that many people do not know that they are being discriminated against, and that it is the job of the Commission to make that determination.

Director Torres informed participants that staff would be providing surveys for completion by all participants. Director Torres provided Commission contact information to participants, and also offered to come out and talk more to any community group which would request it.

It was determined that there were six discussion tables all together. Director Torres then asked Table #6 to provide a report out of their discussion(s) and discuss the themes.

Commissioner Gerhardt reported out for Table #6. The Commissioner talked about subtle discrimination and the way that it can show up in contracts. She reported that a participant, who is a black filmmaker who grew up in Pittsburgh, gets a lot of jobs in New York and talked about the exclusion of blacks from positions of authority in advertising and creative work. Commissioner Gerhardt also talked about a developer at the table who had experienced discrimination when he put down deposits for property and was unable to secure that property however it was given to white real estate agents.

Commissioner Gerhardt stated that documentation is important when you are experiencing a difference in treatment. Another person asked whether anything would change unless there were people in power in business and in foundations that were African American/ minority persons. Finally, they noted a long time pattern of a housing policy that actively displaced thousands of black people, as well as the apparent misuse of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding.

Janice White stated that Table #5 talked about the use of CDBG funds and the lack of transparency in the policy/process. They stated that they wondered where the accountability was, and could an organization file a suit against the City regarding the use of CDBG funds. The table felt that the misuse of funds was discriminatory.

From Table #4, Commissioner Young reiterated that their table focused on the theme of wages. The lack of fair wages for work, and the way that this is hidden because there is no way of knowing that a person is making less than someone else. She also reported that they discussed housing and gentrification, and questioned what they could do about it. Transportation was also a topic of importance with regard to displacement of people to outside of the city, and the direct relationship of this to housing. As persons are displaced out of the City, now with bus cuts, being so far out means being cut out from jobs. There was a discussion of the lack of political will to make a real change, and that the same issues happen over and over. They stated that Superintendent Thompson and Chief McClay, who wanted to make substantial change, were run out of town and that seems to be the trend.

An unnamed citizen report out for Table # 3. The table discussed new forms of discrimination such as the way you dress or the type of hairstyle someone has. They also talked about language barriers, such as not speaking English, etc. The table also

discussed the importance of public transportation, and how jobs have been denied by employers because someone cannot make it to work on a shift because the busses don't run during that time. In housing, the table discussed how when particular blocks are redeveloped, they believe that some percentage should be affordable housing. They discussed new housing complexes being built by the East bus way that did not include any affordable housing.

From Table #2, Leanne Davis stated that theme was how resources, including transportation, get to where they are needed in terms of structure and lack of service, affordable housing, and closing schools. Their table also discussed getting CDBG money where it is needed most.

From Table #1, Commissioner Mohammed also stated that CDBG came up, and an agency office using zip codes to hire as a proxy to discrimination. They discussed the concept of hearsay and how hard it is to prove discrimination because it is covert. They discussed the concept of steering – going to a landlord or realtor and the housing provider sends you where you think you should live. The table talked about the process of how to have better forums and be more productive with improving civil rights.

V. EXIT SURVEYS & CLOSING REMARKS

Director Torres asked participants to please complete the exit surveys and hand them to staff before leaving. He stated that if someone felt that their voice wasn't heard, the surveys are an opportunity to provide feedback to the Commission. Director Torres further stated that participants should feel free to reach out to him at any time to listen or talk to any group in any neighborhood, because the Commission could not act and ensure civil rights protections if they did not know the problem existed.

Molly Nichols asked a clarifying question on jurisdiction, and asked if non-City residents could make complaints. Director Torres stated that if the harm happened within the City limits and within the last 365 days, then it is a complaint the Commission can take. He reiterated that it did not matter whether the Complainant was a City resident. Ronell Guy asked if the Commission could do class action lawsuits. Director Torres stated they could, and that it could be discussed later. Another participant (name unknown) asked if the Commission had the power to stop people from being forced out of communities. What was the Commission's track record, and what was the success record. The Director stated that the Commission has been around for 65 years, and that there were instances in which the Commission failed to do its job. Director Torres reiterated that the Commission would come back and create the space and opportunity to discuss issues of civil rights.

Commissioner Craig asked Director Torres to talk about the Community Relations Committee's role. Director Torres explained that the Commission was planning for six public hearings regarding police and community tension in each police precinct to hear

from the community. He stated that the Commission would make a report on the problems brought up and provide to the appropriate entities to ensure solutions.

Director Torres further stated that the Commission has the power to hold public hearings to make policy recommendations to the Mayor and City Council. Ronell Guy asked about making recommendations to the Housing Authority, and Director Torres indicated that doing so is trickier. Molly Nichols asked how it was “trickier.” Director Torres stated that the process is changing to affirmatively furthering fair housing due to the receipt of federal funding.

Ronell Guy stated that the City was lying about what they do with their CDBG monies. Director Torres stated that the City now has to answer any inquiries regarding CDBG funds. Director Torres stated that the Commission can contact HUD regarding a complaint regarding the CDBG funds.

An unknown participant asked that if they do some digging, can the suit be filed against the City itself. Director Torres stated that the funding agency that gave the money could be made aware of the findings.

Commissioner Gerhardt encouraged participants to send the Commission of their concerns, “the director’s going to make sure that the information would not go to waste and would do their best that their information has effect.

Commissioner Drawn-Williamson asked Director Torres to talk about the follow up to the meeting. Director Torres stated that within 90 days, staff would make a report which would be available on the website and as a hardcopy that could be mailed upon request. The Commission could also have the report translated upon request.

Bill Bartlett clarified whether the Commissioner terms were staggered.

In closing the meeting, Commissioner Fogarty asked that everybody vote!