Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations
Minutes of Meeting
September 17, 2018

Attendance:	Liddy Barlow, Secretary	Marian Lien
	Winford Craig (by phone)	Richard Morris (by phone)
	Helen Gerhardt	Mariana Padias, Chair
	Sharyn Henry	Allyce Pinchback
	Eric Holmes	Lori Roth
	Eric Horwith	Gwendolyn Young (by phone)
Absent:	Gabriel McMorland, Wasiullah Mohamed, Jessica Ruffin	
Staff:	Megan Stanley, Rachel Salem	
Guests:	anupama jain, Lindsey Disler, Gabrielle Rajerison	

I. Call to Order

Commissioner Padias called the meeting to order and circulated a card for Sheron Clark, who is retiring on September 28 after 25 years of service. She invited the commissioners to contribute toward a clock as a retirement gift. Commissioners are invited to attend a 2 p.m. celebration on September 28 with cake and well wishes for Ms. Clark.

II. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

III. Guest Speaker: anupama jain

anupama "anu" jain introduced herself: she is the Executive Director of the City of Pittsburgh's Gender Equity Commission. The Commission was formed by a city ordinance in December 2016 approving CEDAW (also known as "the International Bill of Rights for Women"). The fourteen commissioners were seated in February 2018. The commission is gathering resources about gender equity and its impact, taking an intersectional approach to address issues such as socioeconomics and literacy. They are currently selecting among proposals to do a comprehensive gender analysis of the city, including information on violence, workforce development, housing, and many other factors. They hope that the analysis will lead to the creation of a five-year gender equity plan that can be implemented across city departments. The commission's public meetings take place on the third Tuesday of every month except November, from 2:30-4:30 p.m. in the CHR conference room. Like CHR, they are interested in increasing local awareness of cultural diversity and historical patterns of discrimination against women.

Commissioner Gerhardt discussed her work on the AFFH task force, which has found that displacement seems to disproportionately affect women. Ms. jain responded that while

displacement is not the GEC's primary focus, she expects that their upcoming analysis will touch on this topic. Commissioner Gerhardt will follow up on this.

Ms. jain circulated a sign-up sheet for the GEC's monthly e-newsletter on legislation and events. They are advocating for funding to do data analysis and welcome help in that area, as well as in informing and educating people on the business case for gender equity.

Commissioner Roth said that education is not in purview of this Commission; is it in yours? Ms. jain replied yes. Their work will include early childhood education and child care.

Commissioner Pinchback said she had wondered whether the Gender Equity Commission heard cases, and she learned the answer was no. She confirmed that anyone the GEC encounters who is experiencing discrimination based on gender would be directed to the CHR.

Ms. jain said the work of the two commissions may overlap in proactively seeking to create cultures without discrimination. San Francisco has found reductions in domestic violence and homicide through the work of its commission. Some work will be long-term and other issues will have more simple solutions.

Ms. Stanley said this commission is happy to repay the favor and visit the Gender Equity Commission at an upcoming meeting.

IV. Adoption of the Minutes

Commissioner Padias asked if the Human Rights Assessment survey was made available electronically as promised in the July minutes; Ms. Stanley said it was not; she will send it out.

MSP (unanimous): Minutes approved.

V. Executive Session

There was no business requiring an Executive Session.

VI. Committee and Staff Reports

A. Director's Report

Ms. Stanley reviewed the Director's Report on behalf of Director Torres, who is out of town. She and Mr. Torres are setting up meetings with Council members about the budget; she invited Commissioners to participate in these meetings as they are able. One meeting is this week, a few next week, and others in the first week of October. Ms. Stanley circulated a sign-up sheet and will also send the sign-up sheet out electronically.

Director Torres has been working on the Housing Opportunity Fund Advisory Board, which is conducting a survey with community members on potential uses. He and Ms. Stanley both attended the Housing Authority's meetings on the Small Area Fair Market Rent vouchers with Commissioner Roth.

Commissioner Gerhardt said one policy of interest to the AFFH task force is funds for legal defense and mediation. Ms. Stanley said that need has arisen in the community meetings as well; she agreed that this is an issue that there is much interest and awareness about.

B. Finance Committee

Commissioner Young reported that she will meet with Director Torres next week to finalize the budget, followed by meetings with City Council members.

C. Community Relations Committee

Commissioner Lien reported that Community Relations and Youth Community Relations are merging. Commissioner Padias commended this decision. Commissioner Lien and Commissioner Pinchback will co-chair the new combined committee.

D. Housing Committee

Commissioner Morris said that the committee has developed a working paper and would like to offer it for discussion at the November commission meeting.

> **MSP (unanimous): that the commission grant permission to the housing committee to issue its working paper and that it be discussed at the November meeting.**

Commissioner Morris said the paper should be published by the end of this week.

Commissioner Gerhardt said the first public meeting for AFFH task force will take place October 11 at the Kingsley Association; this one will be in the East, and further meetings will be in South, West, and North. This is the chance for community members to bring back more detailed feedback on policies discussed over the summer. They are reaching out to groups with particular expertise who can comment on the proposed policies' potential effects. She is asking commissioners to recommend people with specialized knowledge or experience who can review the policies and provide feedback, either electronically or by attending these meetings. The meetings are being promoted on Facebook, the CHR Web site, a flier, and newspaper advertisements.

Ms. Stanley said the commission is working to launch a quarterly newsletter with a community calendar for commission-related events. Commissioner Lien noted that the Community Relations committee should be involved in that project.

E. Personnel Committee

Commissioner Padias said the committee has been updating evaluation materials for Director Torres. Commissioners will receive a survey today; it will be due September 28. The hope is to have the full evaluation complete by mid-October.

In response to a question from Commissioner Horwith, Commissioner Padias said that the commission had to terminate Rick Rogow as an investigator after allegations of sexual harassment; he has been terminated and has a grievance pending. Ms. Stanley said the commission has had to hold his position open during the arbitration process. Commissioner Gerhardt noted that this is creating a burden of work for the rest of the staff.

F. Public Hearing Committee

As there have not been any public hearings since the last meeting, Commissioner Barlow had no report.

G. Bylaws Committee

The committee has not yet met. Commissioner Young said she will connect with Commissioner Morris and will report back. Commissioner Padias said additional members of this committee are welcomed.

H. Youth Human Relations Committee

Commissioner Pinchback confirmed that this committee has now merged with the Community Relations Committee.

VII. New Business

A. C-SAW Letter of Support

Guests Gabrielle Rajerison and Lindsey Disler described the labor dispute between the University of Pittsburgh, its graduate students, and its faculty. Graduate students are not currently able to bargain collectively regarding their compensation. They have concerns regarding affordable health care, childcare, and equity among students of different races, genders, and sexual orientations.

Both the faculty and the graduate students are working to form a union. The faculty started collecting union cards to hold an election this winter. The graduate students had collected cards and filed for an election, but the university is filing a claim that they are not workers but trainees and thus do not have the standing for a union. The University is using tuition funds to oppose their efforts. Pitt recently hired Ballard Spahr, "a union-busting law firm," which, when employed by Penn State, threatened to revoke visas of international students.

Ms. Rajerson and Ms. Disler said the graduate students are working to build support from undergraduate students and community members to put pressure on the university. They asked the Commission to sign on to a letter joining the C-SAW (Community and Students for Academic Workers) coalition and making three demands of the University of Pittsburgh: to remain neutral regarding the campaign, to stop spending public funds and tuition on union busting, and to stop arguing that grad students are not workers. The C-SAW coalition is made up of a growing list of undergraduate and community organizations.

Commissioner Roth said that although she is sympathetic to the students, she is not sure what the interest of the Commission is in this matter in regard to our mission. Who is the protected class in this matter? Commissioner Gerhardt replied that unions help represent concerns regarding discrimination involving race, gender, and sexual orientation.

Commissioner Craig said he does not believe this act falls in the purview of our charge, has there has been no discrimination so far. If there is something later that falls within our purview, then sooner or later that will come before us.

Commissioner Gerhardt told the guests that if they collect information, whether individual or collective, about discrimination against a protected class, that would be within the purview of the commission.

Commissioner Pinchback noted that retaliation is a protected class. Ms. Stanley said this class usually refers to individuals who have engaged in a protected action, been part of another discrimination case, or reported discrimination to HR; we would need to verify that forming a

union counted as retaliation in this case, and that those working on the union were treated differently, such as in pay or conditions.

Commissioner Roth said signing the letter may make it difficult for the commission to hear cases involving students and university later on, as we would have appeared to have taken sides already.

Commissioner Padias clarified that the question of whether the students are allowed to unionize is being heard by the PA Labor Relations Board and is outside the purview of this body.

Ms. Stanley noted that matriculation status is not a protected class in the city of Pittsburgh.

Commissioner Padias quoted the section of the city's law instituting the commission, which charges us to "institute and conduct educational and other programs to support equal rights of all persons." By that definition, signing the letter could be within our duties. But, that doesn't answer question of implications if a related case emerges later.

Commissioner Horwith said it has been a challenge for some time to determine on what issues the commission should speak.

Solicitor Hamilton said the letter needs to be reviewed for congruence with the city code. He would like to deliberate before offering an opinion. He has concerns about whether the three demands fall within purview of commission, and what precedent would be set by the blurring of political and legal lines. Commissioner Gerhardt said the letter is asking the university to follow due process of law.

MSP (11 yes, with Commissioner Horwith abstaining): that the letter be tabled.

Commissioner Padias said we will return to this topic in November, as our October meeting will be a public meeting.

B. Liberty School Project

Ms. Stanley and Director Torres are planning a "Know Your Rights Day" on a school half-day, March 8, to introduce rights and how to stand up for them with fourth and fifth graders. They are also planning an essay contest. A draft of the student civil rights code is available for review. Commissioner Morris asked commissioners to review this work and to join them on March 8.

Speaking of dates, Ms. Stanley is working on a Google Calendar for Commission events and associated community calendar that commissioners can share. Commissioner Lien said Welcoming Pittsburgh already has a calendar for community events; maybe this can be shared. The Community Relations Committee can participate in this project. Ms. Stanley will circulate a Doodle poll to confer about this in more detail.

C. Monthly Mini-Trainings

Ms. Stanley circulated a survey about training topics, which will be conducted during the commission's regular meetings.

D. STEM Fest

Ms. Salem said the city is taking part in STEM Fest, a science and technology event for children, on September 22 at the Robinson Mall from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. She asked commissioners to sign up for slots to sit at the CHR table, asking children trivia questions about civil rights and inviting them to spin for a prize.

E. Fair Housing Training

The commission has organized a professional development training for its staff on October 4 at 10 a.m. on Fair Housing; this would be a useful session for commissioners to attend. Ms. Stanley is also willing to send out the PowerPoint. Commissioner Gerhardt said that for commissioners serving on public hearings or compliance review, understanding this framework is very useful. Commissioner Pinchback asked that the PowerPoint be distributed.

F. Staff Retreat

The Commission's staff will have a retreat this Friday to work on team building and visioning as staff, and a fun team-building activity.

G. Chair's Report

Commissioner Padias reported that she has initiated conversations with nine commissioners so far to discuss the internal dynamics of the commission. Some commissioners are unhappy with how the commission is currently run, but all are hopeful about the future. Themes that emerged from these conversations include:

- The commission is dysfunctional. Members talk to each other and relate to one another in ways that are not in conformity with our mission. There is confusion about roles and expectations of commissioners and staff. We need clarification on our mission and mandate: Are we neutral or advocates? Do we seek out cases? How do we work with other commissions and organizations in the city? All of this is made more challenging by our phone-in policy: how do we relate to each other if some of us are on the phone all the time?
- The work we do with the commission doesn't always feel like time well spent. Committees aren't sure of their work, and not everyone participates equally. There's no accountability for committee work. Our committees must become more efficient and effective.
- There is tension between more experienced commissioners and newer ones. This is better than it was, but not good enough. Newer commissioners feel as if they are spoken down to and silenced when they raise questions and ideas. It can be hard to get your bearings as a new commissioner. All commissioners don't know each other very well.

When Director Torres arrived, the commission may have tried to do too much too soon. Now is the time to take a step back, regroup, and move forward. Our November meeting will take place at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, with the regular meeting from 3:30 to 5:00, followed by a retreat from 5:00-8:00 so that we may come to a unified vision. The staff is invited to participate and we will use same facilitator the staff is using on Friday.

To get to know each other better, we will start meetings with check-ins. As we get new commissioners, we will assign them a more experienced commissioner to answer questions.

The bylaws committee will examine our phone policy. Each committee will create internal guidelines on participation and time expectations. Commissioner Padias is open to other ideas to address these concerns as well; email or call her with more ideas.

She said that first we must address respect and decorum by creating ground rules for our meetings, and asked commissioners for their additions. The Commission brainstormed a list of Ground Rules:

- Public comment time limits
- Follow Robert's Rules procedures
- Step up, step back – be aware of who is talking and adjust your own comments according
- Be respectful – avoid yelling, interrupting, wait for recognition
- Speak up when possible when you are hurt or offended: in the moment or after a meeting. It may be necessary for commissioners to speak up on behalf of staff given the power differential.
- Develop shared values
- Acknowledge good work
- BE KIND

Commissioner Pinchback suggested that the group may need a parliamentarian. Commissioner Young said the bylaws committee had previously discounted that idea. Commissioner Roth said maybe the Motions Commissioner could fill this role.

Commissioners Horwith and Holmes said that while the commission examines its mission, it might also examine its values and vision: how we pursue our goals, and where we are headed. We all want to achieve things together: now we have an opportunity to assess where we are and what more needs to be done.

VIII. Adjournment

MSP (unanimous): that the meeting be adjourned.