

**Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations
Minutes of Meeting
October 1, 2018**

Attendance:

Liddy Barlow, secretary	Marian Lien
Winford Craig	Richard Morris
Helen Gerhardt	Mariana Padias, chair
Sharyn Henry	Lori Roth
Eric Holmes	Gwendolyn Young

Absent: Eric Horwith, Gabriel McMorland, Wasiullah Mohamed, Allyce Pinchback, Jessica Ruffin.

Staff: Carlos Torres, Megan Stanley

Guests: Carol Hardeman, Chad Dion Lassiter, Renee Martin, Gale Schwartz, Jackie Smith, Lyle Wood, 4 other members of the public.

I. Call to Order

Commissioner Padias called the meeting to order.

II. Public Comments

There were none.

III. Adoption of Minutes

MSP (unanimous): that the minutes be adopted.

IV. Executive Session

There was none.

V. Presentation of Human Rights Assessment Report

Commissioner Padias thanked the members of the public for attending the meeting and filling out surveys, the Kingsley Center for hosting this meeting, and the academic partners (Dr. Brian Calfano, Dr. Valerie Martinez-Ebers, and Dr. Jackie Smith) for their assistance in producing the report. Having good data about what is happening in our community is necessary for the commission to do its work. The report will also be helpful as the commission prepares for strategic planning.

Director Torres introduced the report, noting that he is eager for public feedback, especially as this is the commission's first human rights assessment. The purpose of the assessment is to understand the experiences of city residents. It provides baseline measure of resident's experiences and perceptions in relation to civil rights issues.

Director Torres reviewed data collection procedures. Respondents had to be at least 18 years old and residents of the City. The data was collected using a 38-question survey available both on paper and via iPad, in English and in Spanish. In the future they will consider having it available in other languages as well. Special efforts were made to reach under-represented populations. Data was collected in summer 2017. The initial goal was to collect data from 1000 residents. In the end, they heard from 1754 residents.

The report is divided into four sections: 1. Perceptions of unfair treatment 2. Workplace issues and accommodations 3. City services and public accommodations and 4. Housing and neighborhood. Director Torres reviewed highlights of the findings:

- The most cited reason for difference in treatment at work is gender.
- ¼ of respondents felt they were treated differently by law enforcement based on color of skin. This has been a hot issue nationally; our police department has made lots of effort in this area but this finding shows there is work to be done.
- ¼ of respondents cannot walk to a grocery store from their home.
- The most contacted city service was 311.
- 2/3 of respondents believe race relations in their neighborhood will stay the same over the coming year.

Director Torres also shared key recommendations from the report:

- Employers should conduct regular classification and compensation studies to address potential gender wage gaps and to ensure equal compensation and access to opportunities for all employees.
- Workplace notices should be posted in English and Spanish.
- The city should conduct town hall meetings or deliberative forums to bridge the gap between law enforcement and those who have had negative experiences in the past. Law enforcement should highlight the work they do to keep communities safe. The police department should continue to work with the Trust and Justice Initiative for procedural justice and implicit bias trainings.
- The city should support the work of the AFFH Task Force in recommending policy changes to alleviate barriers and disparities in housing.
- The city should work to eliminate food deserts by incentivizing markets and grocers to work into these areas.
- The city should increase outreach and education to employers to increase awareness of their responsibilities.
- The city should continue to learn about experiences of renters to guide future fair housing activities.

Director Torres invited questions from Commissioners and guests.

Commissioner Padias asked why the report recommends incentivizing large-scale grocers rather than small businesses. Director Torres responded that large grocers often have the resources to expand into new areas, while small markets may face financial barriers. Commissioner Gerhardt shared her experience in this area from her work at Just Harvest, describing the extra support needed to help small grocers provide fresh produce. Currently the

federal government is cutting these incentives and putting work requirements on SNAP and Medicaid.

A public commenter, Gale Schwartz, said the report should take the health care systems into account. The commission should look at health outcomes as a measure of equity and ask the health networks to help finance solutions. Director Torres said city participated in an equity index study earlier this year by Rand which looked at health indicators; our assessment did not include that information. Ms. Schwartz noted that UPMC and Allegheny Health Network are required to do community health assessments; we should engage with them. Commissioners Morris and Young, as well as public commenter Carol Hardeman, agreed that health issues have equity implications. Dr. Smith suggested that the Center for Health Equity at the University of Pittsburgh might be a useful partner for the Commission in pursuing these questions.

Commissioner Morris asked Dr. Smith to comment on the concept of housing as a human right. She replied that housing is considered a human right internationally, but states do not always ensure that local communities enforce those rights. Dr. Smith is part of a movement to help local communities know and carry out these rights. The Commission could be a good ally in this work. She would be happy to share relevant treaties the U.S. has signed that outline rights in housing, health, and racial and gender equity. The language in those treaties can support the work the Commission is doing.

Commissioner Young asked if the assessment showed evidence of racial discrimination in employment. Director Torres responded that yes, race was the second more frequent response after gender. Commissioner Young asked that race be added to the recommendations in the report.

Ms. Young noted that the report may not be representative of all Pittsburghers; there may be views and experiences not captured in this data. She recommends doing another assessment to get even more diverse sample. Director Torres explained that the first 1000 respondents were identified by Qualtrix; the next 700 were solicited at senior centers, Pride Fest, health fairs, and other public events. Ms. Young said that, compared to census data, our sample reflects Pittsburgh demographics accurately in some areas but not in others.

Director Torres recognized the Director of the State Human Relations Commission Chad Dion Lassiter, the Regional Director Lyle Wood, and the Communications Director Renee Martin, and invited their comments. Dr. Lassiter said that the data in our report has been replicated all over the country. Ultimately, the cause for many of the noted discrepancies is institutional racism.

Dr. Lassiter invited everyone to the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission Social Justice Lecture Series. The first event in the series took place in Harrisburg as Tim Wise addressed racism. The next event will take place on October 22 in the O'Hara Ballroom at the University of Pittsburgh featuring Michael Eric Dyson. Subsequent events will focus on sexual harassment, transphobia, and xenophobia.

Dr. Wood said the public session for the PA Commission's meeting will take place on October 22 from 1-4 p.m. Director Torres will sit on a panel exploring gentrification and changing demographics. Ms. Martin will circulate fliers for this event.

Ms. Hardeman asked if the Commission is providing training for the housing authority, City Council, the Mayor, and other city agencies. Director Torres said he meets one-on-one with the mayor on a quarterly basis. The mayor is aware of the AFFH recommendations. The

Commission is also in conversation with City Council, though some members are more receptive than others.

Commissioner Gerhardt distributed a summary of AFFH suggested policies and a flier for the public feedback meetings. The first such meeting will take place here at the Kingsley Association next Thursday the October 11. Feedback is critical for making revisions; be sure to invite people who have experienced barriers or have special expertise and solicit their assistance. She circulated a sign-up sheet.

Dr. Smith said that it may be helpful to change the name of the Commission to be the Human Rights Commission. People don't know what you do with the current name; a change would help our organizing work in the community.

MSP (unanimous): That the commission formally consider changing its name to Human Rights Commission at its next meeting.

Commissioner Padias said this discussion will happen in December because next meeting is our retreat.

Commissioner Padias said Commissioner Gerhardt's term is up and she is not seeking re-appointment. Commissioner Padias thanked her for her countless hours of service to the commission. She has made sure our work is transparent and accountable. Her work on AFFH has been so important.

Commissioner Gerhardt replied that it has been a pleasure and an honor working with the Commission. She will continue serving on AFFH as a representative of the food policy task force, and she will stay on the Commission until she is replaced.

VI. Adjournment

MSP (unanimous): that the meeting be adjourned.