

Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations
Minutes of Meeting
April 1, 2019

Attendance:

Commissioners:	Liddy Barlow, secretary (via Zoom)	Wasiullah Mohamed
	Winford Craig (via Zoom)	Richard Morris (via phone)
	Helen Gerhardt	Mariana Padias, chair
	Sharyn Henry	Lori Roth
	Eric Holmes	Eric Horwith
	Gabriel McMorland	

Absent commissioner: Gwendolyn Young

Staff: Mark Hamilton, Rachel Shepherd, Jam Hammond

Guests: Leanne Davis

I. Call to Order

Commissioner Padias called the meeting to order.

II. Public Comments

Jam Hammond, the Commission's newest investigator, introduced himself. His position includes community outreach.

III. Adoption of the Minutes

Minutes of executive session are not available and will follow. The following corrections were noted: Feyi Alabi of Welcoming Pittsburgh's name was spelled incorrectly, and Commissioner Padias stepped down as chair of the personnel committee, not as a member of the committee.

MSP: That the March minutes be accepted with these amendments, tabling the executive session minutes.

IV. Committee and Staff Reports

A. Interim Director's Report

Ms. Shepherd invited the Commission to review Interim Director Stanley's written report and let her know if there are any questions.

Leanne Davis, executive manager of the City's Ethics Hearing Board, spoke about her work at the Board. She reminded Commissioners to complete the required conflicts of interest form and reviewed procedures for recusing oneself from voting on matters when there is any appearance of impropriety. Forms are due to the City Clerk's office by May 1. Training opportunities will be forthcoming.

B. Finance Committee

In the absence of Commissioner Young, there was no report.

C. Community Relations Committee

Commissioner Craig had no report.

D. Housing Committee

Commissioner Morris asked Ms. Shepherd to speak about the April events for Fair Housing Month. The invitation-only event in cooperation with FHP will take place April 15, featuring Anna Maria Farias of HUD. All Commissioners should have received an invitation. The public event will be April 24 event at Pitt, with the presentation by the AFFH task force and Andre Perry as keynote.

Commissioner Morris drew the Commission's attention to House Bill 81, a measure that would reduce the amount of time before a tenant can be evicted after a possession judgment from 21 days to 12 days. Commissioner Morris asked the Commission to sign on opposing this bill. Commissioner Padias noted that the letter in the packets is from last year's version of the bill. Commissioner Morris said there is a new version, which needs to be submitted to Harris They need to be submitted to Harrisburg by the end of this week.

Commissioner Padias suggested that the Commission could cede responsibility to sign on to the Housing committee.

MSP: That the Commission cede authority to the Housing Committee to determine whether to sign on to an updated version of this letter on behalf of the full Commission.

The Housing Committee will receive the updated letter today and will make that determination prior to the sign-on deadline.

E. Personnel Committee

Commissioner Roth reported that the director position posting is ready for release. Ms. Shepherd said it will be up later this week on the city website, government jobs, indeed, Nonprofit Talent, LinkedIn, the Post-Gazette, and the Courier. The link will be circulated to commissioners for distribution in our networks, and shared in the Commission email blast. It will be posted for thirty days.

Commissioner Padias noted that Jam Hammond has started work in the outreach position.. New investigator Chris Soult will begin work April 8. The remaining investigator position will be filled by Rita Porterfield once she concludes her final months of work in her current position.

F. Public Hearing Section

Commissioner Barlow had no report.

Commissioner Padias reminded all committee chairs that the new bylaws require reports from all committees prior to the meeting.

V. New & Old Business

A. Annual Report

Commissioners received the annual report in their meeting packets. Comments on the report are due by Friday so it can be sent to the printers. Commissioner Padias said the report appears comprehensive; it's good to see an increase in the case load. Commissioner Craig suggested that the commissioner biographies be omitted, but Commissioner Padias said she feels they are important. Ms. Shepherd asked commissioners to update their biographies if needed.

B. Nominations and Recruitment of New Commissioners

Majestic Lane was unable to attend today's meeting. If anyone's term has expired and they would like to continue on the commission, they are welcome to make that request.

The mayor's office is open to receiving recommendations for commissioners from the Commission. Commissioner Padias asked each commissioner to recommend 2-3 potential commissioners to the mayor's office. There are currently three open positions on the Commission, with six commissioners serving in expired terms, for a total of nine openings on a 15-person Commission. The commission is meant to represent the diversity of the city, without having quotas for specific representation.

Commission Holmes asked if we might ask members of City Council for nominations, which is how the process worked in the past. Commissioner Padias wondered if this might make the process too political; Commissioner Gerhardt noted that the independence of the Commission is essential; she wants to be sure that experienced and knowledgeable advocates for civil rights are included on the commission. Commissioner Horwith noted the importance of broadening the Commission's membership beyond our networks so that the Commission does not become insular or biased.

Commissioner Henry asked for clarity on how many commissioners currently serving with expired terms would prefer to be reappointed. Commissioners Padias, Craig, and Horwith would like to leave the commission once their replacements are appointed. Commissioner Gerhardt is still deciding whether to stay or go. Commissioner Morris is willing to stay on for at least one more year.

Commissioner McMorland suggested that we revisit whether to ask City Council to nominate potential commissioners in May, after commissioners have had the opportunity to intensify their recruitment efforts. Potential commissioners can complete the form on the website or send cover letter and resume to email address on our business cards.

C. Service Animals

Ms. Shepherd drew the commission's attention to a recently-created fact sheet on service animals, and noted that the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police will be pursuing training on ADA requirements, from the commission or another entity.

D. "Terrible, Thanks for Asking" Podcast

Commissioner Henry noted that she and Commissioner Mohamed were interviewed for this podcast after the Tree of Life shooting; the episodes are now available and will be shared by the Commission.

VI. Adjournment

MSP: that the meeting be adjourned.