

# Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations

## Minutes of Meeting

October 7, 2019

### ATTENDANCE:

**Commissioners:** Wasiullah Mohamed, Chair  
Tracy Baton via telepresence  
David C. Bush via telepresence  
Zack Block  
Sonya Toler  
J. Matthew Landis  
Rev. Liddy Barlow

*Absent commissioners:* Michael Bartley, Jennifer Presutti, Rabbi Sharyn Henry, BJ Samson

**Staff:** Megan Stanley, Director  
Rita Porterfield

**Guests:** None

### I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Mohamed called the meeting to order at approximately 3:36pm.

### II. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

### III. ADOPTION OF MINUTES – 3:41 p.m.

Corrections to the minutes were as follows: Commissioner Bartley’s name is correctly spelled B-A-R-T-L-E-Y and not B-A-N-T-L-E-Y; University of Pittsburgh Master’s in Library Sciences candidate identified as Dan is more completely identified as Przybylak; the word “feedback” should be feedback.

***Motion to approve minutes as corrected by Commissioner Barlow; Seconded by Commissioner Landis; unanimous voice vote in favor, motion carried.***

### IV. EXECUTIVE SESSION

N/A

## V. COMMITTEE & STAFF REPORTS

### Director's Report

- ☞ A Google Drive has been created for Commissioners' use
- ☞ Chairs of Committees are to update reports and meetings on the spreadsheets therein
- ☞ Meeting at Taylor Allderdice High School with the parents and soccer players went well as a show of support from the Commission to the community. No complaint has yet been filed with the PA Commission and there is some concern in identifying a respondent. WPIAL hearings were delayed at the parents' request.
- ☞ CMU Housing Data Mapping Project: a contract has been drafted and sent to CMU for review. Areas of interest for this project include housing crisis; inclusion of advocates and concerned developers.
  - Trek and Walnut Capital expressed desire to sponsor events during fair housing month including donations of event space and food;
  - Commissioner Barlow expressed concern of the impact of receiving sponsorship from developers. Director Stanley responded that sponsorship must be, and has been, done with honesty and transparency and allowing for all sponsor; some developers view this as a good representation and chance to give back. CMU has a reputation of data integrity and no developer is paying for the data or report development.
  - Commissioner Toler asked about including smaller developers; Director Stanley reported that she is looking for contacts and is open to meeting with other developers
- ☞ Attended Sara Innamorato's co-governing event. There are new proposed amendments to the Landlord Tenant Act and an exchange of perspectives would be beneficial
- ☞ Regarding the CMU mapping project, the Pittsburgh Foundation has asked to coordinate a philanthropic plan with the Commission. Such a plan will consider the social impact on Pittsburgh and its people, and the Foundation will coordinate donor funding, which is good for improving community relationships and efforts by and between the Commission and residents at large, but especially those interested in facilitating the Commission's mission.

- Commissioner Mohamed inquired about project funding noting that \$20,000 is available from the CDBG fund and \$10,000 has been contributed by CMY for the housing data mapping project. Director Stanley indicated that there was stable funding for update contracts related to the data mapping project, and those updates can be more impactful if properly managed. The Pittsburgh Foundation, however, would be able to sponsor individual events to present the findings and data tools that will eventually be made available. At this time, CMU has put forth some in house finding and later that funding could be supplemented by others as the need arises.
- ☞ Housing research: Commissioner Toler inquired about comparator cities for opportunity research. Director Stanley responded that right now, Cincinnati; Cleveland; Minneapolis; Kansas City, Missouri; the State of Ohio; and the State of California are being used for comparison. Commissioner Toler suggested Baltimore's seawall project for review. Commissioner Mohamed inquired about the purpose of the research. Director Stanley responded that the goal is to determine how other communities define opportunity, how housing is maintained or built according to market demands.
- ☞ There is a housing opportunity fund and there has been a City Council employee appointed to serve on the same, and may be a connection to attend meetings and retrieve minutes; purpose is to further fair housing (AFFH) and there are fifteen recommendations. Commissioner Landis inquired if there was any research on this, perhaps some presented from Rep. Innamorato. Director Stanley indicated that Bob Damewood (phonetic spelling) may have additional research. However, Raj Chetty and the Opportunity Atlas could be a useful tool for informed policy making. New information or resources should be entered into Google Drive as the Commissioners encountered them.
- ☞ A press conference was held October 1, 2019 for the Proclamation of Zero Evictions Day. Raising awareness to inequality and inequities in the City for different residence, as part of the larger UPR sent to the United Nations
- ☞ Deputy Director Speary recounted the meeting with members of the Iroquois Confederation; essentially seeking recognition and property from the City; members declare themselves as having ancestry from the aboriginal Americans, but are not

necessary Native American or part of any recognized tribe or nation. They are not seeking Federal recognition. Members seek to be exempted from all City laws even when leaving any land they may acquire from the City. The Commission is serving as the liaison between the City and the members. The members are also concerned about being perceived as Black and targeted by police. They also want connections with PCRB and OMI. The members promised to deliver documents in support of their requests for staff to review. The members were referred to the Commission from the Mayor's Office when they requested diplomatic immunity. Commissioner Barlow asked if there was any law or precedent on this issue; Deputy Directed referred to the existence of a body of law known as "sovereign citizen", but more research would be necessary. Director Stanley added that the offered to sell land for \$1,00 but it was refused as the members determined it violated their believe that all land in Pittsburgh is stolen land. Members have also requested blanket tax exemptions.

- ☪ All-for-All Summit is scheduled for 10-12-19 and people for tabling could be useful
- ☪ Thanksgiving Tabling is scheduled for 11-16-19
- ☪ EEOC Regional Conference is coming up and will be in Baltimore, Director Stanley to attend
- ☪ The Pittsburgh Foundation is having a meeting on evictions on 10/30 and the Commission will attend to present its housing data mapping project.
- ☪ Motion to recognize Commissioner Baton as Chair of the Community Relations Committee by Commissioner Block, Commissioner Barlow seconded, carried by unanimous voice vote in favor of the motion.

#### **Finance Committee**

- ☪ Commission is meeting its financial targets; can start planning 2020 budget
- ☪ Director Stanley spoke to the changed from transitioning out of Act 47 and that the preliminary budget met all of the Commission's requests for an overall increase in funding of \$90,000.
- ☪ Motion to accept the report by Commissioner Landis; seconded by Commissioner Baton accepted by unanimous voice vote in favor of the motion

#### **Community Relations Committee**

- ☪ The committee has not yet met but expressed goals.

- ⚡ Focus will be on youth community development and curriculum that could be expanded to adults.
- ⚡ Director Stanley indicated that there was nothing in the code that prohibited the appointment of a Commissioner under 18; other Commissioners noted that this would be an option to discuss at a formal committee meeting

#### **Housing Committee**

- ⚡ Received PAR Report from HUD which indicated that Commission Staff should focus on faster investigations and more complete data input
- ⚡ Goal is the launch of Fair Housing Assessment Report/CMU meetings

#### **Personnel Committee**

- ⚡ Formal introduction of Deputy Director Wesley Speary
- ⚡ Deputy Director Speary and Commission Representative Rita Porterfield will be attending mediation training
- ⚡ Staff acquired Casetext as a legal research tool and are joining Deputy Director Speary and Commission Representative Rita Porterfield as members of the Allegheny County Law Library as additional legal research tools become needed on a case by case basis.
- ⚡ Goal of the Committee is to complete Director Stanley's review

#### **Public Hearing Committee**

- ⚡ None

### **VI. NEW/OLD BUSINESS**

- ⚡ Strategic Planning for 2020:
  - All commissioners are invited to schedule 1:1 meetings with Chair Mohamed to clarify mission goals or suggest directions
  - 1:1 meetings will be confidential and need not include the Director
- ⚡ BJ Samson has been appointed as a Commissioner and was approved by council without interview. Director Stanley will be administering orientation and meeting with Chair Mohamed for a 1:1 meeting.
- ⚡ Four (4) additional commissioner seats remain unfilled; the City will not be advertising these vacancies despite Commission/Staff Attempts. Commissioner Landis suggested that there are no commissioners who may be able to provide perspective from the

Immigrant, Youth, or LGBTQIA+ experiences. There are also no commissioners with a legal background or commissioners who are attorneys. Commissioner Mohamed mentioned outreach to Law students of color in the community may be helpful. Deputy Director Speary suggested that vacancies could be advertised on the Commission's web site.

**VII. ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion by Commissioner Landis; Seconded by Commissioner Block; Adjourned 4:54 p.m.**