

**Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations
Minutes of Meeting
July 1, 2019**

ATTENDANCE:

Commissioners:	Liddy Barlow, Acting Chair	Wasiullah Mohamed
	Tracy Baton	Jennifer Presutti
	Sharyn Henry	Sonya Toler
	Eric Holmes	

Absent commissioners: Zack Block

Staff: Megan Stanley, Acting Director
Mark Hamilton, Solicitor
Rachel Shepherd, Emily Costello, Chris Sault, Savannah Wesolowski,

Guests: Jackie Smith, Human Rights City Alliance

I. CALL TO ORDER

Acting Chair Barlow called the meeting to order at approximately 3:38pm. She asked the commissioners and staff to briefly introduce themselves, as a few new commissioners were in the room for the first time.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

Jackie Smith from the Human Rights City Alliance (HRCA) spoke to commissioners and staff about working together with the Commission regarding human rights efforts in Pittsburgh. Ms. Smith reminded everyone of the former request to change the name of the Commission to the Commission on Human Rights in order to better reach the community about what we can offer. Acting Chair Barlow stated that the Commission was going to look into the legal, administrative and financial ramifications of this change and determine the steps involved. Ms. Smith suggested that in order to keep this on our radar we propose the change to City Council, and rather than letting the logistics drive the decision to keep in mind that this would better serve the community. Acting Director Stanley mentioned that with the upcoming council budget meetings we would have the opportunity to suggest this change, and to discuss the budget ramifications of such a change. Ms. Smith stated that HRCA would be happy to provide a letter of support for the name change to be presented to council.

Ms. Smith went on to invite the Commission to be sponsors for a Human Rights cookout on August 25, 2019 in Mellon Park across from Bakery Square, as it would be a good way for

commissioners to engage with the community and show support for human rights. The Gender Equity Commission is also co-sponsoring. Acting Chair Barlow asked for a motion regarding this proposal, pending any discussion. Ms. Smith stated that the sponsorship would involve helping to promote the event, and if any resources are available to help provide food.

Commissioner Baton mentioned that she would like a way to show the surrounding communities that they are welcome to participate, as this type of event can be off-putting because of the location. Acting Director Stanley mentioned that our outreach staff person Jam Hammond would be engaging the community via social media, in-person engagements, and communication with organizations.

Motion by Commissioner Mohamed to sponsor the Human Rights Cookout on August 25, 2019, with room for further discussion on the financial support aspect. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Toler. The motion carried.

Ms. Smith went on to say that October is considered “Zero Eviction Days” and HRCA and its partners are brainstorming ways to commemorate this. Acting Director Stanley mentioned that the Commission will be releasing its Fair Housing Assessment, which could involve a public meeting with which partners can participate.

Ms. Smith invited the commissioner to participate in the Universal Periodic Review

III. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Commissioner Holmes asked that the minutes be updated to reflect that he was indeed participating by telephone, and staff made a note to make that change.

IV. EXECUTIVE SESSION

V. COMMITTEE & STAFF REPORTS

Director’s Report

Acting Director Stanley presented the director’s reports for May and June. The highlights included the conclusion of the performance assessment review by HUD, a summary of the Liberty School event wrap-up, the initial Citiparks summer camp interaction with the Housing Opportunity Game, the gender identity and expression updates in City Code, and Commissioner Mohamed being recognized as the Thomas Merton Center’s Person of the Year. Some coming events of note are the commissioner orientation, for which existing commissioners are welcome to participate, the operating budget meeting with the Mayor on August 12th, and the 50th anniversary of the addition of sex as a protected class and the documentary premiere for Changing the Want Ads. Commissioners are welcome to attend the latter event and should let staff know if they would like to so that a ticket could be purchased for them.

Commissioner Toler asked about the meeting with Alison Hardnen, and Acting Director Stanley summarized that there are a restaurant and bar owner and a neighbor who are having community tension issues. The Department of Public Safety was already involved but invited the Commission to participate for mediation purposes. Unfortunately, the business owner is not willing to mediate the issue and is likely pursuing legal action against the City. However, this incident has brought up the topic of community tension and started a conversation on ways the Commission can be helpful in these instances. It has also shed light on dress code issues with local bars that may be discriminatory, and the staff are staying abreast of the issue.

Community Relations Committee

There is no existing Community Relations Committee, so there was no formal report. Commissioner Baton mentioned that Juneteenth had just passed and she would like to see more involvement from the Commission at these types of events. She stated that more City participation overall would be preferred, as events like the St. Patrick's Day parade have a lot of support. Acting Chair Barlow stated that she had similar thoughts as she was walking in the Juneteenth parade in a different role. Acting Director Stanley stated her appreciation for the suggestions and agreement that the Commission should be sitting down to discuss which events to be present at, so there is adequate representation.

Commissioner Baton also stated that she has experience working with people on the issue of dress code and racism, so she would be happy to consult on the issue.

Personnel Committee

Acting Chair Barlow referred to the committee report provided in the packet, and called for a motion to appoint Acting Director Stanley as the new executive director.

There was a motion to appoint Acting Director Megan Stanley as the full-time, permanent Executive Director of the Commission on Human Relations by Commissioner Holmes. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Henry. Commissioner Presutti abstained. The motion carried.

Acting Director Stanley mentioned that she recently distributed a committee report template for each committee to use monthly to report out on activities more consistently.

VI. OLD/NEW BUSINESS

2020 Budget

Acting Director Stanley and Rachel Shepherd presented the proposed 2020 budget draft to the commissioners. The highlights include:

- Changing the salary split for union employees to eliminate expenditure from the EEOC Trust Fund
- \$8,000 increase in professional services for language access
- \$5,000 increase in legal fees for the solicitor contract
- Small increases in supplies, promotional advertising, and operational supplies

Commissioner Presutti asked to see a budget or spending plan for the EEOC and HUD trust funds, as they were not included in the packet presented to the commissioners. Acting Director Stanley promised to provide same.

There was a motion by Commissioner Mohamed to accept the proposed 2020 budget as presented. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Baton. The motion carried.

Elections

Acting Chair Barlow suggested that the election of the executive committee be postponed, as so many new commissioners were being appointed and would need time to acclimate and learn more about the positions they would hold. There was discussion of who would take minutes, as there is no secretary, and it was decided that staff would step in temporarily.

There was a motion by Acting Chair Barlow to appoint Commissioner Mohamed as the first vice chair, and Commissioner Henry as the second vice chair, until the postponed election in September. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Baton. The motion carried.

August Meeting

There was a discussion on when to hold an August Commission meeting, as there would typically not be an August meeting but with the June meeting being canceled it would be prudent to hold another meeting to stay in compliance with the minimum of ten meetings per year rule. It was decided that it would be best for the most commissioners to hold the meeting on Monday, August 12th.

CMU Project

Acting Director Stanley explained the proposal to partner with Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) CREATE Lab on a housing mapping project, which was demoed for commissioners a few meetings ago. The map will serve as a virtual representation of housing issues in Pittsburgh, including discrimination, evictions, displacement, etc. This project will allow the Commission to identify problem areas, track issues, and pursue Commission initiated complaints. The intent is to use CDBG funding from the 2017 allotment to pay for this, and staff has already discussed the implications of

this with the community development team of the budget office. The next step is to submit a resolution to City Council, followed by the development of a contract with the vendor and law department. Community Development Block Grant funding would be used for this project, as well as financial contributions by CMU and the Fair Housing Partnership.

There was a motion by Commissioner Mohamed to move forward with the project as described. There was a second by Commissioner Baton. The motion carried.