

Erie County Human Relations Commission
Minutes—July 31, 2018

Attendance

Commissioners: Tracy Leet, Connie Manus, Shawnta Pulliam-Brown, Amy Danzer, Tony Logue
Staff: Charlotte Scalise, Wayne Harbison
Guests: Doug Smith, Brian Spry, Heidi Meyer
Advisory Board Members: Mary Jo Campbell, Christine Mitchell, Diana Ames

Commission Members Not in Attendance

Willy McAdory, Hallie Hilinski

The position from Kathy Dahlkemper and Kathy Fatica on the Commission are still open.

Meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm

Approval of Minutes

Amy Danzer made a motion to make a correction to the minutes for the date being 2918 to 2018.

Tracy Leet made a motion to approve the minutes from June 26th, 2018 .

This was seconded by Tony Logue

They were approved unanimously

Directors Report (Staff report by Wayne Harbison)

We have 8-10 cases being actively investigated at this point. There was a client requesting a full copy of her file, she is a complainant. We will keep original and give her copies. Wayne has an appointment with a possible housing discrimination case tomorrow. We are getting some uptake in public accommodation cases. Most cases are employment discrimination.

Hearing tentatively scheduled for August 21, 2018 and we will need an attorney for this hearing. We will also need 3 commission members.

Old Business

Employment seminar went well, about 120 attendees. Some suggestions for improvements and possible location change.

Looking for dates in September and October to do some Fair Housing Outreach in Edinboro, Millcreek and Northeast

Try to get tenants and landlords to come to meetings but would need to be in the evening. There will be a need for physical locations for meetings in these areas. Charlotte has reached out to consider options.

Roughly 2 hour time period

Celebrate Erie: Commission will not go to the event as it is not a viable location for outreach and office needs to be covered and with limited staff, there is not adequate coverage.

New Business

Introduction of new member, Shawnta Pulliam-Brown

There are still 2 positions open on the commission under Kathy Fatica and Kathy Dahlkemper.

Hearing scheduled for August 21, 2018. Shawnta Pulliam Brown, Tony Logue, Connie Manus and Tracy Leet will attend. Amy Danzer and Willie McAdory have a conflict of interest.

The Commission needs legal counsel for the hearing.

Brian Spry is an attorney employed at the Elder Kin Law Firm. He has been employed there for 4 months. He worked independently for about a year and was a sole practitioner for about a year. He was at another law firm prior, handles civil litigation and handled cases with County Council for about 6 months to 1 year. He has had cases before dealing with the Human Relations Commission and he has an interest in this area. He is here to learn about the position and what it would involve. Brian has expressed interest in representing the HRC in the upcoming hearing. There would be no conflict of interest from prior positions Attorney Spry has held. He has contracts with the County as a court appointed parent attorney and with SafeNet prosecuting PFA's.

Heidi Meyer, former Investigator, noted the commission would need someone to deal with the legality of enforcement of the ordinance. The ordinance is on the County Website. Heidi Meyer would assist, but she assisted with investigating and therefore has a conflict of interest.

Search for a new Executive Director. There have been rumors of interest in defunding the commission and Amy Danzer asked if this was being discussed.

Doug Smith feels this is not being discussed by county council at this time and the council is interested in bringing in a director that will ensure the office is run correctly and the clients get the services as intended.

HRC is asking for the current job description from Doug Smith for the Executive Director so the commission can use this in searching for the right candidate. There may be some proposed changes to the job description in order to ensure the position is meeting the needs of the County, the Human Relations Commission and the Advisory Board.

Doug Smith will deliver the job description tomorrow via email and Charlotte Scalise will distribute to members.

Set up search committee. Amy Danzer does not feel this should only be members of the commission but open to other members to be on the committee.

Tony Logue noted that County Council will be the hiring authority for this position. Should the commission establish a search committee or will the council hire someone regardless. Is county council going to form their own search committee? Amy Danzer, chairperson, noted from the bylaws, the commission is to hire an executive director with the approval of county council. There has been discussion that some council members would like to be on the search committee so as to have collaboration between the commission and the council in order to hire a new executive director. This would be the most desirable process from the standpoint of the commission.

The commission and the council need to have collaboration in order for the commission to be successful and sustainable.

Members desiring to be on the search committee:

Mary Jo Campbell, Christine Mitchell, Diana Ames, Connie Manus, Amy Danzer.

Two commissioners not here, Willie McAdory and Hallie Hilinski, will be asked if they would like to be on the committee.

Members that have volunteered will reach out to their appointees to start the discussion about the search committee. Communication needs to be initiated and more open in a general sense.

Shawnta Pulliam-Brown would like to discuss the relationship of supervision of county employees with the HRC. It would be best to have everyone working together (council, Advisory Board and HRC). We will be having this discussion as we address the job description for the new Executive director. Expectations will be aligned and dialogue will be available to all parties involved. We have the outline of what the job entails in the current ordinance, but in light of recent circumstances, there may need to be some changes. Procedures and operations will be discussed and decisions will be made. The commission and the advisory board will discuss the process and forward movement.

Everyone should be looking at the ordinance, policies and procedures and bylaws to be educated for the discussion.

These improvements can really benefit the community.

Doug Smith expressed the intention of attending future HRC meetings so we can avoid lack of communication and have an understanding of personnel issues.

Amy Danzer expressed her intention of fostering this relationship in order to avoid future fall out.

Doug Smith thanked Charlotte Scalise and Wayne Harbison for their endurance and understanding through this difficult time.

Elections will be discussed at the next HRC meeting.

Doug Smith will purchase a recording device for minutes for the HRC.

Public Comment or Open Discussion

Diana Ames reported that Ben Laudermitch, director of housing with the Department of Human Services will be here on August 29-31 and would like to visit with the HRC and the Advisory Board. He would like to meet with members on the 30th if possible. Charlotte will email to coordinate a possible group to meet with him, also to determine time and location.

Adjournment

Tracy Leet moved that the meeting be adjourned. It was seconded by Tony Logue and approved unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 7:55pm.