

Erie County Human Relations Commission (ECHRC) – Special Commissioners Meeting

Minutes/Notes – June 18th 2020

Call to Order/Roll Call:

The Meeting was called to Order by Commission chair Shawnta Pulliam-Brown via conference call at 6:00 PM.

Commission Members Present: Shawnta Pulliam-Brown (Chair) Mary Jo Campbell (V-Chair) Christine Mitchell (Sec.); Connie Manus, Tracy Leet,

Commission Members Not Present: John Steiner, Willy McAdory, Mike Martin.

Advisory Board Diana Ames

ECHRC Staff Present: Tony Logue, Wayne Harbison Attorney Spry.

County Council Ellen Schauerman Kathy Schaaf

Chair Pulliam Brown discussed the purpose of the special meeting – it is solely to discuss the Commissions Ordinance related to the preparation of the Annual Report to City and County Council under Ordinance Article 5 section C.4 ordinance citation

ERIE HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION: POWERS AND DUTIES

C. Upon adoption of this Ordinance by County Council, the Commission is hereby vested with the authority to administer and enforce this Ordinance and in connection therewith it shall have the following powers and duties: (My right to enforce the Ordinance)

4. The Commission and its staff shall be responsible to provide annual written reports of its cases and activity, as well as a financial report to Erie County and Erie City governments, as required by the Administrative Code.

After much research and due diligence, the chair discovered since the inception of our HRC Office there has never been an annual report submitted, and she believes that is a problem when it comes to the trustworthiness and accountability of our HRC Office.

She believes the lag in progress, and neglect of cases under the previous director, has a lot to do with our policies not being carried out properly. Therefore, she scheduled a meeting with our current Director and Ms. Ames on February 24th to discuss the importance of the annual report. The annual report still needs to be done so this is why the chair has scheduled this Special Meeting so all can be involved.

According to our Bylaws Article 5 section 1, the role of Chair is to, communicate and interpret policy, serve as a link between the commissioners, Advisory Board and the director on matters of policy. So, for anyone who is confused with the emails being exchanged back and forth, it is because she was enforcing an ordinance and was receiving a lot of resistance. Roles and responsibilities will be detailed in the next meeting minutes.

Diana Ames has agreed to provide an annual report at her regular Advisory Meeting.

Why an Annual Report is important?

From our chair the reason for an annual report, is that we are a public agency, providing a public service, therefore, Public companies have a statutory requirement to send an annual report, not only that, it is an already established requirement in our Ordinance, particularly, for our Commission under ORDINANCE ARTICLE 5 C4

1. The commission's Annual Report in alignment with our ordinance shall include the following: A) reports of its cases (how many open, closed, pending, hearings and results without names)- (this information should be provided by our investigator and the director in November.

B) Activities (this information should be provided by commissioners, advisory board, the director and staff in November

C) Financial reports - the financial report should be provided by our Director. In November

This all should be submitted to City and County Council

Therefore by providing and magnifying our required Ordinance obligation our chair requiring the Commission's annual report take effect this year 2020, under the Ordinance Article 5 Section C4. The annual report should be submitted at the beginning of 2021 not to exceed the first quarter. Agreed to do the 2019 report in 2020 and then ongoing per this schedule. So annually during our November meetings these submissions will need to be presented during our Commissioner meeting. Once we have everything collected I'd like staff to write up the report

The chair will email all a copy of the Ordinance requirement and information due dates.

Regarding our Policy and Procedure Manual under the same Ordinance..:

Staff responsibilities are to be defined in this manual and currently are not, so a request needs to be made in County Council to include those descriptions in the policy and procedure manual.

Attorney Spry: questioned asking that the bylaws be changed and amended. Chair's response: We must enforce what has never been put into place. Attorney Spry requested a vote on doing an annual report. Chair response the annual report has already been voted on because it is a part of the Ordinance and we must carry it out because it has not been carried out since our inception.

Our chair questioned Attorney Spry, indicating his role is our panel attorney, panel advisor, he was not hired for board governance he is our hearing panel attorney, so she asked if the amendments he was suggesting directly affected him. Attorney Spry responded to be technical, we should use a legality attorney

Our chair indicated that we have the legal expertise and the experience of the state HRC Office who has been reviewing our Ordinance and Bylaws also it is the role of the Commission with the approval of the County Council to amend policy and we may ask the advisory board to assist by an official calling of a joint meeting. Attorney Spry responded that is fine he would not offer legal advice about Ordinance or Bylaws.

Adjourned at 6:22 motion by commissioners Campbell and Leet.