

Erie County Human Relations Commission (ECHRC) – Commissioners Meeting

Minutes/Notes – June 23rd 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, Mike Martin.

Commission Members Not Present: John Steiner, Willy McAdory.

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

County Council Ellen Schauerman

Approval of Commissioners Minutes / Notes:

The Minutes of the May26th Meeting approved by the Commissioners Motioned by Commissioners Campbell/Leet.

With addition of Ellen Shaeurman present. Commissioner Martin wanted his sunset law cases added.

Discussion on meeting between Chair Pulliam Brown and Director Logue as Chair Pulliam Brown was not in agreement with that meeting and Director Logue wanted his willingness to meet again and prepare the annual report any time. Chairwoman Pulliam-Brown only wanted a public meeting in the future not individually.

Request by director to add email into the minutes.

Mike Martin called the question. Roll call vote Chairman Pulliam-Brown no Mary Jo Campbell yes Tracy Leet no Christine Mitchell yes Connie Manus no motion failed

We agreed to review the recording to determine additions to minutes. Anything not in that meetings recording will be added to the June minutes. Emails do not belong attached to minutes.

Tabling until the amendments are complete approved unanimously.

Since the discussion on the meeting between Chairwoman Pulliam Brown and Director Logue were not in the May recording we are adding that discussion here. Chairwoman Pulliam Brown was not in favor of a private meeting. She requested a public meeting and Director Logue indicated he was always willing to meet and work on the annual report.

Guest / Public Comment(s):

Chair Report / Commissioners Comment(s): Annual report needs prepared. We need to serve the community. Under the ordinance article 5 we need to prepare the report also in the bylaws article 5. We are working to gather all the data and prepare this report by the end of 2020 to county council as required. The advisory board also is preparing their report as well from their last meeting. The chair also is working on clarifying roles and responsibilities.

Roles and responsibilities citations.

.The Role of Commission Chair may be found in our Bylaws Article 5 section 1 which States:, The role of Chair is to **communicate and interpret policy, serve as a link between the commissioners, Advisory Board and the executive director on matters of policy.**

Role of Exe Dir: Bylaws Article 5 Section 5. Appointment and Duties of the Executive Director:

The executive director shall be given the authority to administer the day-to-day operations of the ECHRC in accordance with the personnel policies set forth by the County and authorized by the Commissioners. As executive director, he/she shall be responsible for overall management of the ECHRC subject to audit by the Commissioners. He/she is directly responsible to the Erie County Human Relations Commission.

The executive director shall be responsible for preparing and submitting appropriate budgets and fiscal reports to Commissioners, the County Executive, City and County Council.

Role of Advisory board: Article 7 section 1

Section 1. Purpose:

The Board of Advisory may perform research, education, and public relations duties under the direction of the Erie County Human Relations Commission.

The Advisory Board shall keep the Commission aware of its concerns through regular reports to the Commission.

The Advisory Board shall have elected officers identified in Article IV, Section 1, and, subject to the interest and commitment of the Advisory Board members, shall have committees identified in Article VII, Section 3, of these by-laws.

Panel Attorney Role

Ordinance

Article IV

Z. The term “panel advisor” means an attorney appointed by the Commission to serve as their advisor during the hearing of complaints. He/she shall serve as **legal advisor** to the Commission and shall be totally separate from the staff who gives fact-finding assistance to complainants. Following a hearing the Panel Advisor will submit to the Hearing Panel and then to the entire Commission the Panel’s recommended findings of fact, conclusions, of law, legal opinion and order. He/she shall be paid pursuant to the provisions of the existing County budgeting procedures.

Attorney Sprys role was also outlined in the Erie County Human Relations Commission Minutes—July 31, 2018

Bylaws citations

Who amends and authorize the bylaws: Bylaws Article VIII

Amendments

These by-laws may be altered, amended, or repealed by an affirmative vote of no less than two-thirds (2/3's) of the regular members of the Commission. The Commission may seek the advice of the Advisory Board at a properly called joint meeting. Notice of any such amendments to the by-laws must be mailed to all members of the Commission and Advisory Board at least twenty (20) days before the meeting at which the voting will take place.

Erie County Council must ratify amendments so adopted.

Bylaws amendments were proposed. The commission needs to be approved by a 2/3 vote of the commission. They can seek the advice of the advisory board. They should be reviewed at a joint meeting advertised in advance.

Director's Report:

Director Logue.

There are currently 9 active cases. Also there are 7 recent calls on many issues. Disruption to the office due to Cov19 need video tools like zoom and requested. Need better tools to get fact finding and hearings scheduled. Discussed meetings – Mr Smith indicated we could have meetings in county council chambers and procuring zoom. Director Logue repeated his and Advisory board member willingness to meet with Chairwoman Pulliam-Brown. Chairwoman Pulliam Brown wanted a public meeting in the future. Directory Logue commented on our panel attorney(s) Spry and Sunwabe. He did not like the treatment of Attorney Spry at the last meeting. Directory Logue commented on the Pennsylvania human relations commission indicating we are separate and we will take advice but our ordinance is different and they have been sued several times.

Chairwoman Pulliam Brown responded that she was willing to meet but wanted it public after the disagreement over who was to prepare the bullet points at the last meeting between Chairwoman Pulliam Brown, Director Logue and Chairwoman Pulliam Brown. She asked why Attorney Spry was providing not only advice but recommending bylaws changes.

Director Logue asked who had been in touch with the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission and Chairwoman Pulliam Brown discussed last year's meeting with them where the advisory board did not receive the invitation from the Erie County HRC office.

Commissioner Martin asked when our fiscal year was and discussed the objective of getting an annual report and the deadline for the report. We discussed a 2019 report and upon request from Commissioner Martin we proposed a 2019 annual report rather than waiting until 2021 to show all the progress made. This report would include the basics of financials, cases and core activities. Director Logue indicated he had the information available for a draft 2019 report and could provide a draft for the July meeting since he had the information since February and would have a draft in July. The 2020 report will still be due 1st quarter 2021. Mike Martin motioned this Mary Jo Campbell seconded All approved this motion and plan of action. This report will include financials, cases, workload and basic activities.

Attorney Spry discussed his role as panel attorney and asked why his role was questioned to advise on bylaws. Chair Pulliam Brown clarified the advice from the HRC regarding co-mingling. In addition, she stated that the State had reviewed our bylaws and confirmed that staff does not amend the bylaws but the Commissioners, with ratification from County Council. Attorney Spry indicated that his concerns were with the policy and procedures manual being consistent. Attorney Spry agreed to summarize in an email for all commissioners.

Old Business:

New Business

Chairwoman Pulliam Brown thanked all for their hard work.

Adjournment:

There was a motion to adjourn by commissioners Leet and Campbell and the meeting was adjourned at 7:10 p.m.