

Minutes of the Cook County
Commission on Human Rights – Open Session
September 15, 2022

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Attendance via video:

Present: Jack Block, Chair S. Mayumi Grigsby, Vice Chair Gia Orr, Sufyan Sohel, Rev. Richard Tolliver, Anjali Waikar

Absent: Ceylan Eatherton, Amber Smock, Deputy Director J. King, Legal Counsel K. Khan

Staff Present via video: Director S. Baker, Deputy Director J. King, Investigator A. Cahn, Investigator J. Jones, Investigator J. Brown, Investigator O. Cobbins, Outreach and Training Coordinator J. Epplin-Zapf, Administrative Analyst K. Johns, Executive Assistant A. Sumpter

Open Session

A. Call to Order

Vice Chair Grigsby called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m.

B. Statements by the General Public

There were no statements by the public.

C. Agenda Approval

Director Baker recommended the agenda be amended to accommodate a status update on 2021JHA013 during executive session. A motion to move item 2021JHA013 to the beginning of executive session and then approve the amended agenda was approved by unanimous voice vote.

D. Approval of the July 21, 2022, Regular Meeting Open Minutes

The meeting minutes for the July 21, 2022 Regular Meeting Open session were approved and adopted with five “Ayes” and one abstention.

E. Commissioners’ Updates

Commissioner Waikar reported that she would be serving as Northeastern Law School’s Daynard Public Interest Law Fellow and leading a panel discussion on environmental justice law.

Vice Chair Orr updated the commission about the gubernatorial disaster proclamation in response to bussing of Latin American migrants to Illinois. She stated that the commissioners should use the influx as an opportunity to facilitate access to services from their respective organizations and agencies. Chair Grigsby proposed that a link for donation and volunteer opportunities be sent among the commissioners. Director Baker

stated that matters regarding service opportunities related to human rights and ethics should be shared with the department's outreach and training coordinator.

F. Working Group Updates

Vice Chair Orr reported on the Outreach and Training working group's initiatives, including the creation of updated outreach materials. She stated the commissioners were sent a one-page guide via email to be used when talking about the commission's work at public-facing events. She also noted this guide will be used to develop a full public relations training for the commissioners, which she anticipated would be held in winter 2022-2023. Vice Chair Orr reported updates on the creation of the commission's Instagram account, temporary nametags, and "Where to File" grids for public referrals to other human rights agencies.

Outreach and training coordinator J. Epplin-Zapf provided updates on events hosted by the Commission. She highlighted (1) a discussion on the "Illinois Muslims Needs, Assets, and Opportunities Report," (2) a Cook County United Against Hate tabling event, and (3) participation at Fall Nature Fest. She also reported on future participation at Every Child Matters Pow Wow and the women's resource fair hosted by Housing Authority of Cook County. J. Epplin-Zapf offered to send the commissioners outreach materials upon request. Chair Grigsby also confirmed that the special meeting with Professor Martha Davis would occur on October 13, 2022 from 11 AM to 12 PM.

Vice Chair Orr reported on behalf of the strategic planning working group. She stated the strategic plan implementation worksheet would be under review by herself and working group co-chair Smock upon her return. Vice Chair Orr informed the commission that the working group and staff were in the process of developing a vision statement that would drive the commission's goals for a three-to-four-year timeframe. The working group was also in process of gathering data to illustrate the commission's achievements and inform performance metrics.

G. Director's Report

Director S. Baker reported there were 54 open and active cases so far in Quarter three. She attributed the increased number of cases and intakes to outreach efforts by staff and the commissioners. Chair Grigsby asked if the spike in cases showed an increase in the number of housing-related cases. Director Baker responded that while she was unsure of the specific number, she suspected the increases were either in housing or employment-related complaints. Vice Chair Orr asked if there were trends in repeat offenders, to which Director Baker replied there were apparent repeated complainants. She and the commission staff stated they were unsure what motivated repeated complaints.

Vice Chair asked if there were any recent complaints related to access to county facilities and credit transactions. Investigator A. Cahn noted there had been complaints regarding access to county facilities, but not enough to indicate a trend. Vice Chair Orr stated gathering data on these areas may be used to guide strategic planning efforts. Investigator O. Cobbins mentioned a couple discrimination cases that involve credit

transactions. Chair Grigsby requested statistics about the number of cases that pertain to those areas. Commissioner Block also requested information surrounding the number of cases that go to mediation and their success rates, which Director Baker said staff would be able to provide.

Closed Session

At 10:47 a.m., the Board unanimously voted to move into Executive Session.

Open Session

At 11:07 a.m., the Board reconvened to Open Session.

J. Voting Regarding Executive Session Items

The meeting minutes for the July 21, 2022, Regular Meeting Closed Session were approved and adopted with five “Ayes” and one abstention.

By unanimous voice vote, the commission approved a motion in case 2021JHA013 which called to defer a motion requesting a transfer to circuit court.

The commission voted on and approved a motion to grant 180-day extensions on the following investigations: 2022H004, 2022JHA004, 2022PA001, 2022SC002, 2022E005, and 2022E001.

K. Adjourn

By unanimous voice vote, the meeting adjourned at 11:13 a.m.

Minutes submitted by board staff.