

Minutes of the Cook County
Commission on Human Rights – Open Session
November 10, 2022 at 10:00am

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Location: Remote on TEAMS

Attendance via video:

Present: Jack Block, Chair S. Mayumi Grigsby, Vice Chair Gia Orr, Michael Lapinski, Amber Smock, Sufyan Sohel, Rev. Richard Tolliver, DHRE Staff

Absent: Ceylan Eatherton, Anjali Waikar

Open Session

A. Call to Order

Chair Grigsby called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.

B. Statements by the General Public

There were no statements by the public.

C. Agenda Approval

A motion to approve the agenda was adopted by unanimous vote.

D. Approval of the September 15, 2022, Regular Meeting Open Minutes

The meeting minutes for the September 15, 2022 Regular Meeting Open session were approved and adopted by unanimous roll call vote.

E. Commissioners' Updates

Director Baker introduced new commissioner Michael Lapinski. Chair Grigsby provided the Commission an open invitation to Chicago Foundation for Women's annual luncheon, for which she would send along information.

F. Working Group Updates

Commissioner Sohel invited outreach and training coordinator Julia Epplin-Zapf to provide updates for the outreach working group. She highlighted the working group's initiative to publicize Human Rights Day through a series of videos. She noted the creation of the Website Improvement Group, which would review the Human Rights Commission webpage and implement accessibility tools. Epplin-Zapf concluded with 2023 annual planning goals, encouraging the Commission to reach out with any recommendations on event ideas.

Vice Chair Orr presented updates related to the Strategic Planning working group. She highlighted progress on the working document, including the Commission's goal to align the strategy the Cook County Equity Fund report. Vice Chair Orr also mentioned the development of a vision statement, emphasizing that vision will serve to steer the strategic plan. Vice Chair Orr and Commissioner Smock ended with inviting any of the commissioners to join strategic planning and provide feedback.

G. 2023 Schedule of Meetings

A motion was made to approve the 2023 Regular Meeting Schedule and Commissioners adopted the 2023 Meeting Schedule by unanimous roll call vote.

H. Director's Report

Director Baker reported on the human rights data from Q3 2022, which included updated statistics on the newly filed cases and settlement amounts. Commissioner Block noted a significant increase in new cases during Q3 2022. Director Baker indicated that the elimination of the intake form may have reduced barriers to the complaint process, which could explain the increase in cases.

Outreach and training coordinator Julia Epplin-Zapf highlighted the department's training partnership with Community Investment Corporation and Housing Authority of Cook County. She added that since the partnership started, there has been significant increase in the number of registrants for fair housing training.

I. 2022 Just Housing Amendment Evaluation & Report – Review and Approval

The Commission reviewed the 2022 Just Housing Amendment Report before voting. Chair Grigsby noted the number of complaints that were received from Chicago's west side. Julia Epplin-Zapf stated these statistics would be used to inform targeted outreach and training efforts in that area, specifically through social media advertising in the coming weeks. Vice Chair Orr recommended that department staff could consider large scale efforts to discourage landlords from using discriminatory language in their property listings.

The 2022 Just Housing Amendment Report was granted by unanimous vote. Director Baker stated that the report would be issued after the regular meeting.

J. Investigation Extension Requests

Deputy Director King requested extensions on the 180-day investigation period for 3 cases: 2021E010, 2022E009, and 2022E014. A motion to approve the investigation extension requests for these cases was made and granted by unanimous roll call vote.

Closed Session

At 11:07 a.m., the Commission voted to move into Executive Session to discuss pending litigation with 2021JHA013.

Open Session

At 11:22 a.m., the Board reconvened to Open Session.

O. Voting Regarding Executive Session Items

A motion to approve the September 15, 2022 closed session minutes was made and granted by unanimous roll call vote.

Commissioners voted to maintain confidentiality for the February 2022 and July 2022 closed session minutes, by unanimous roll call vote.

P. Adjourn

By unanimous roll call vote, the meeting adjourned at 11:27 a.m.

Minutes submitted by board staff.