CEDAR RAPIDS CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION (CRCRC)
MEETING MINUTES
February 17, 2016 5:30 p.m.
Civil Rights Commission
50 2nd Avenue Bridge
Cedar Rapids, IA 52401

Commissioners Present: Mr. Keith Rippy, Chair
Ms. Salma Igram, Vice Chair
Dr. Emily Bowman
Mr. Leland Freie
Ms. Laura O'Leary
Ms. Ashley Reynolds
Dr. Ruth White
Mr. Keith Wiggins

Commissioners Absent: Mr. Robin Tucker

Staff Present: Ms. LaSheila Yates, Executive Director
Ms. Janet Abejo, Investigator
Ms. Alicia Abernathey, Administrative Assistant

Guests: Bret Nilles, Christopher Yates, Naomi Jengwa

I. **Call to Order**
Commissioner Rippy, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

II. **Roll Call/Introductions**
Commissioners, staff and guests introduced themselves.

III. **Public Response**
No public response.

IV. **Approval of Minutes from January Meeting**
Commissioner Igram moved to approve the minutes. Commissioner Wiggins seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

V. **Action Items**
Recommendation for an Ordinance amendment of section 69.04 of the Cedar Rapids Municipal Code to reduce the number of members from nine (9) to seven (7)
Commissioner Rippy stated in 2015 the Commission reduced in size from eleven members to nine members and the current suggestion, with recommendation from the Mayor, is to reduce the Commission to seven members. Commissioner Rippy stated it is hard to find applicants for not only the Civil Rights Commission but also for all of the City's boards and commissions. Commissioner Rippy stated both the Des Moines and Davenport Civil Rights Commissions have seven members and this will align the Cedar Rapids Commission with other Commissions of cities similar in size. Commissioner Rippy stated there are 28 Boards and Commissions for the City and 20 of them have seven or less members. Commissioner Rippy stated in the past year there has not been full attendance at a meeting. When there were eleven members only nine people were showing up and now there is approximately seven people showing up on average.

Commissioner Bowman stated she feels the reduction in size will limit having a variety of voices and perspectives. Commissioner Bowman stated reducing the Commission to seven members will not guarantee seven members in attendance at each meeting.

Commissioner White arrived at 5:38 p.m.

Commissioner O'Leary stated the reduction makes her nervous as the Commission may become less diverse. Commissioner Igram stated the current process is to take what you can in order to fill all vacancies. With the reduction to seven members it will allow for the Mayor to be more "picky" in the selection process. Commissioner Rippy stated perhaps a committee can be formed for Commissioners to interview potential applicants and make a recommendation to the Mayor. Commissioner Rippy stated in the past all applicants had to go through an interview process with City Council before being selected to join a board or commission. Commissioner Reynolds stated just because recent Commissioners did go through an interview process does not make them less involved. Commissioner Reynolds stated the City needs to do more to make the community aware the boards and commissions exist and they can apply to join them. Commissioner Freie stated if attendance is a concern perhaps the Commission just needs to be a little harder on those frequently missing and have them consider if they can commit to the Commission.

Commissioner Igram moved to approve the ordinance amendment of section 69.04 to reduce the number of members from nine (9) to seven (7). Commissioner Wiggins seconded the motion. Ayes, Commissioners Rippy, Igram, O'Leary, White, and Wiggins. Nays, Commissioners Freie and Bowman. Abstain, Commissioner Reynolds. Motion carries.

VI. Report from Chair

28E Agreement with Marion

Commissioner Rippy stated two meetings have been held with Marion to discuss changes to the 28E Agreement and one meeting involved both City Managers. Commissioner Rippy stated changes have been made and were reviewed by both City Attorneys.

LaSheila Yates, Executive Director, stated the revised agreement will come before the Commission at the March meeting and once approved will move to City Council for review and approval. Commissioner Rippy stated the new agreement will go into effect on July 1, 2016. Ms. Yates stated administrative work such as the meeting agenda preparation, attendance at Executive Committee meetings, etc. is already being transferred to Marion staff.

March Meeting Date – March 9th or March 23rd

Commissioner Rippy stated there are staff conflicts and the March 16th Commission meeting needs to be moved to either March 9th or March 23rd.

Commissioner Bowman stated she is not available either date. All other Commissioners present indicated March 9th would work for their schedule to meet.

VII. Committee Reports

Outreach Committee Liaison

Commissioner Bowman stated there were significant increases in social media friends/followers. Staff is providing training to PFLAG and Immigrant Concerns in the coming months. The next training hosted by the Commission will be Fair Lending training on April 8th at 10:00 AM. Staff released information pertaining to this year's poster contest. The theme is "What does Fair Housing mean to you" and participants will be placed in two categories based on grade level. There will be a winner and a runner up from each age group and an additional $50 will be provided if the

poster is in another language other than English. Commissioner Bowman stated the Outreach Committee will serve as the judges for the contest but other Commissioners are welcome to judge as well. Commissioner Bowman stated there is an online Fair Housing training that will be completed soon and will allow individuals to get training online rather than in person.

CRCSD Diversity Committee Liaison
Commissioner White stated there are no updates but there is a meeting coming up.

Marion Civil Rights Commission Liaison
Bret Nilles, Marion Civil Rights Commission, stated a presentation was provided from the Marion Housing Director and Marion is hosting a StarPower Simulation event on February 25th.

VIII. **Director's Report**

Ms. Yates stated she is pleased to announce Janet Abejo, Investigator, has been promoted to Senior Investigator effective February 20th. Ms. Yates stated Janet has taken the lead on various projects and helped run the department in her absence. Ms. Yates stated the proposed Assistant Director position was not approved so the Senior Investigator position was modified to include leadership opportunities. Janet Abejo, Senior Investigator, stated she is happy to accept the position and plans to be with the Commission long term.

Ms. Yates stated City Council has approved the request to cover the Commission's rent. Ms. Yates stated staff created a compliance process to ensure those who entered into Settlement Agreements did what was required. The interns are assisting on this project.

IX. **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Alicia Abernathey