

**CEDAR RAPIDS CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
March 18, 2009**

Commissioners met on March 18, 2009 at 5:30p.m. at the Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission office, 425 Second Street SE, Suite 960 Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Commissioners Present: Ms. Miriam Amer, Chair
Mr. Eric Lam, Vice Chair
Mr. George Holmes (via phone)
Ms. Nancy Ziese
Mr. Momodu Kamara
Mr. Rick Zingher
Mr. Roy Porterfield
Mr. Bob Rush

Commissioners Absent: Ms. Tara Youells
Ms. Laura O'Leary
Mr. Kavi Parupally

Staff Present: Mr. Darryl Lipscomb, Investigator
Ms. Michelle Olmstead, Investigator
Ms. Stefanie Robinson, Administrative Assistant

Note: Ms. LaSheila Yates, Investigator and Mr. Karl Cassell, Executive Director are attending an Iowa League of Human Rights Agencies Symposium in Des Moines, IA.

Guests: Mr. MD Wolfgram

I. Call to Order

Noting a quorum, Miriam Amer, Chair, called the meeting to order precisely at 5:31p.m.

II. Roll Call

Commissioners, staff and guest related names.

III. Approval of Minutes

Roy Porterfield moved to approve the minutes from the February 18, 2009 regular meeting.

The motion was seconded by Nancy Ziese.

Correction: The Commission did have a director in July 2007.

The minutes were passed unanimously as corrected.

IV. Old Business

Ordinance Revisions Status Report, and City Attorney Advisory (Eric Lam)

On February 18, the City Attorney sent an e-mail with questions/issues to address. On February 25, Professor Sandler and law students met with Mr. Flitz and addressed all issues. Mr. Flitz was very appreciative of input. There are three additional issues to address:

1. Does Commission have the authority to impose civil penalties up to \$55,000? (No, how can we as a commission exceed the fine amounts by the city?)
2. Can Commission adopt, by reference, the ADA guidelines and justice department amendments? (Not determined yet)

3. Does city have power to require respondents to pay costs of administrative hearings? (Yes, if city amend code to so say)

The City attorney will get an approval for subpoenas; will not need City Council approval.

Miriam Amer asked if the county will be changing their code.

Roy Porterfield said yes, Linn County is looking into this and it would be a new source of revenue for the Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission to be the investigative agency for the county.

Update on Offices Sublet

The landlord has approached Karl Cassell regarding rewriting the lease. Karl will meet with the realtor on Friday morning, March 20, 10am.

We need to follow the City's leasing protocol and coordinate with City Attorney office.

V. New Business

Report on the Legislative breakfast in Des Moines (Nancylee Ziese and Miriam Amer)

Lobbied for the Gender Balance Bill, require local governments to have gender balance on boards.

Subpoena bill will not apply to our commission. It has been passed by Senate and it gives Iowa State Commission Subpoena power. House of Representatives has this bill before them.

Bill to provide remedies for enhanced wages: bill is before the House of Representatives now.

Immigration Reform bill was discussed in Des Moines.

Many legislators do not know the process of Iowa Civil Rights or even Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commissions. We need to provide education; invite local representatives to come to commission meetings. Invite them when not in session so that they can understand and learn the process.

It was a good day and very successful.

Nancylee Ziese noted that on March 21 there is a League of Women Voter's legislative forum which will be located at Mercy Hospital at 10:30am.

Rick Zingher suggested we have sponsored panel discussion, to draw in people from the community.

Bob Rush noted that there are City Board trainings offered April 7(6-7:30pm) and April 9 (Noon – 1:30pm) Trainings are located at the African American Museum. Topics: City's vision, legal requirements (open meeting laws, public records and gift laws), and ethics. Commissioners are encouraged to attend this training.

VISTA (Nancylee Ziese)

Nancylee Ziese spoke of VISTA volunteers.

They are used for many projects such as: working with Police for better relations, art contests, Juneteenth celebrations.

Miriam Amer said that the Civil Rights Commission has been involved with Juneteenth celebrations in the past; we should do this again.

Should we approach Hy-Vee regarding having a Fair Housing logo on grocery sacks?

Roy Porterfield was able to work with Hy-Vee previously for another project; he was able to have a printed logo on grocery sacks.

LaSheila Yates and Karl Cassell are attending an Iowa League of Human Rights Agencies Symposium in Des Moines, IA today.

Miriam Amer stated that Karl Cassell is doing a very good job representing our commission.

VI. Committee Reports

Outreach Committee: Momodu Kamara

Arrange for meeting sites outside of this office.

Hoping for more clarity on expectations of the committee.

Have achievable objectives.

Let public know who we are.

Miriam would be happy to attend the next meeting.

Tara, Kavi, and Momodu are the members of this committee

Personnel Committee: Nancy Lee Ziese

Worked on Board self assessment piece.

Orientations for new board members, possibly ask Louise Lorenz talk about the history of this commission. Who would write materials?

Having someone come in and do a retreat with us; opportunity to get to know each other as individuals.

Have a veteran commissioner mentor a new commissioner.

For the Executive Director: have 2 reviews 6 months apart in the first year. After first year, have an annual review.

VII. Director's Report, Darryl Lipscomb

Training

- Staff went to Kansas City HUD Office
- TEAPOTS data entry better understood
- Commission has been placed on 90 day Performance Improvement Plan
- Site Visit will occur after 90 days (sometime in first of May)

Darryl Lipscomb said that a site visit is routine; HUD wants to verify that the Civil Rights Commission has met the performance goals/objectives.

Please call Karl Cassell with specific questions.

We will send a pdf copy of the HUD Performance Improvement Plan to Commissioners

February and March trainings for Michelle Olmstead

February 13 – Conducted Employment Discrimination and Harassment Training - Goodwill (Iowa City)

February 18-21– Attended American Bar Association Alternative Dispute Resolution Section Seminar

February 25 – Conducted Employment Discrimination and Harassment Training- Goodwill (Iowa City)

March 3 – Attended HUD Teapots training

March 6 – Attended Iowa State Bar Association Employment and Labor Law Section Annual Conference

March 17 – Attended Iowa League of Human Rights Agencies Legislative Breakfast and Annual Meeting

February and March trainings for LaSheila Yates

February 13 – Conducted Employment Discrimination and Harassment Training - Goodwill (Iowa City)

March 3 – Attended HUD Teapots training

March 17 – Attended Iowa League of Human Rights Agencies Legislative Breakfast and Annual Meeting

March 17 – Attended Iowa League of Human Rights Agencies Symposium

February and March trainings for Karl Cassell

March 3 – Attended HUD Teapots training

March 17 – Attended Iowa League of Human Rights Agencies Legislative Breakfast and Annual Meeting

March 17 – Attended Iowa League of Human Rights Agencies Symposium

February and March trainings for Stefanie Robinson

March 3 – Attended HUD Teapots training

February and March trainings for Darryl Lipscomb

February 26 – Attended City Supervisor/Manager Conflict Resolution training

Intern/VISTA Program

- Interviewing for summer positions
- College students are inquiring
- Signed up for VISTA program through Iowa State Civil Rights Commission
- Summer/Full time person will fill this slot

Met with Editorial Board

- Wrote an article on goals and vision of CRCRC
- Continued dialogue will avoid misrepresentation of our work

Miriam Amer said Todd Dorman writes a blog for the Gazette and he had some additional things to say. If any Civil Rights Commissioners have the opportunity, please write a letter to editor.

Nancy Lee Ziese noted that we have opportunity to communicate positive things at this time.

County Ordinance

- Met/talked with 2 Linn County Supervisors
- Interested in contractual agreement to do investigation
- Will continue to dialogue

Legislative Breakfast in Des Moines

- Meet w/legislators to discuss civil rights legislation
- Attending Symposium on Human/Civil Rights issues

Lease Agreement

- Meet with Mr. Arenson representative on Friday, March 20.
- Wants to discuss renegotiations of current contract

VIII. Public Response

Chair: called for public response. There was none.

IX. Adjournment

Momodu Kamara made a motion for adjournment. Roy Porterfield seconded the motion for adjournment, motion passes unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 6:15.

The next meeting will be held on April 15, 2009 at 4:30 p.m.

New Commissioner Training will be held on April 15, 2009 at 2pm.

Respectfully submitted by Stefanie Robinson