

**CEDAR RAPIDS CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
May 20, 2009**

Commissioners met on May 20, 2009 at 5:30p.m.
Meeting location: Temple Judah, 3221 Lindsay Lane SE, Cedar Rapids, IA 52403

Commissioners Present: Ms. Miriam Amer, Chair
Mr. Eric Lam, Vice Chair
Ms. Nancy Ziese
Mr. Rick Zingher
Mr. Roy Porterfield
Mr. Bob Rush
Ms. Tara Youells
Ms. Laura O'Leary
Mr. Momodu Kamara

Commissioners Absent: Mr. Kavi Parupally
Mr. George Holmes (*see note below)

Staff Present: Mr. Karl Cassell, Executive Director
Ms. LaSheila Yates, Investigator
Ms. Stefanie Robinson, Administrative Assistant

*Please note: George Holmes attempted to attend the meeting. At the facility hosting the meeting, Mr. Holmes was caught in the elevator. Several attempts were made to get the elevator in working order and the attempts were unsuccessful. It was decided at that point to contact 911 for a rescue. Rescue workers came immediately and were able to extract Mr. Holmes from the elevator safely.

I. Call to Order

Noting a quorum, Miriam Amer, Chair, called the meeting to order precisely at 5:37 p.m.

II. Roll Call

Commissioners and staff related names and positions. There were no guests at this meeting.

III. Approval of Minutes

Roy Porterfield moved to approve the minutes from the April 22, 2009 regular meeting.

The motion was seconded by Nancy Ziese.

The minutes were passed unanimously.

IV. Old Business

♦ **Ordinance Revisions Status Report, Eric Lam**

- Professor Sandler is on leave from August - December 2009 (He returns January, 2010)
- The Ordinance Revision has been sent to HUD in DC and KC and we are waiting on word from them. We do not know how long their review will take.
- Roy asked if the commission will hold public hearings.
- Response: we have talked about the hearings but nothing has been done yet. It is a good idea.

- Depending on how quickly HUD returns their opinions – this will determine our public hearing.
 - Let City atty. review after HUD reviews.
 - Let City Council see finished product.
 - Rick stated we need to be very clear and open with what we are doing and should always allow public review.
- ◆ **Update on Offices Sublet, Bob Rush**
 - Bob reported there is an ongoing discussion with landlord’s agent Todd Barker. Not optimistic about a resolution.
 - Furniture allowance is over \$100,000
 - Karl and Bob still in “follow up for more info. mode” at this point. They wish to double check the numbers.
 - Miriam Amer said she had asked for an audit from the city about this issue quite a while ago. It is still “pending” on the auditor’s desk. They are “busy with flood issues.”
 - 2010 is when lease completed.
 - Bob said we should take a formal position to direct Karl to send a letter to City Manager, Council, and Auditor respectfully requesting an audit of our commission.
 - Casey Drew had agreed to do the audit at a previous Civil Rights Commission meeting.
 - Include many people on receiving end of letter.
 - Bob made a motion that the Civil Rights Commission direct Karl to send a formal request to the City for an audit of our books and operation.
 - Roy second motion
 - Discussion
 - Karl is in agreement of audit.
 - NancyLee said that May 22, 2008 was when the initial city audit was requested
 - At any point, did Roy (past chair) get to see or sign anything. No, Roy never saw copy of lease before moving into.
 - Vote: motion carried unanimously
 - ◆ **KW and filing date**
 - The filing date has passed and we have not heard anything yet.

V. New Business

- ◆ **Commission Retreat, NancyLee Ziese**
 - Personnel committee has discussed a retreat for commissioners.
 - Outreach committee also discussed this idea as well.
 - Especially with new members coming on board and current new members.
 - Invite existing members for an orientation refresher.
 - Invite Louise Lorenz to talk about history
 - Rick said that if we have a retreat, it needs to have meaning. It would be helpful to have the opportunity to process the Self evaluation form at a retreat. Also do an educational piece at the retreat. Concerns of availability.
- ◆ **Vote for Administrative Hearing, Case 3027**
 - LaSheila Yates is investigator on case 3027
 - LaSheila asked if we could go into a closed session.
 - Miriam said that we are unable to go into closed session because it is not a personnel issue. Miriam was directed by the city atty. Office on this protocol,
 - LaSheila referred to previous memo sent to Commissioners regarding confidentiality protocol.

- This is a Housing case, on the basis of race. Mediation and Conciliation are always attempted
- We are voting on whether or not an Administrative Hearing can take place.
- Tara asked for clarification: if a commissioner knows someone of same name but is not sure of identity of person, should commissioner abstain from voting?
- Yes, you should abstain. Tara, decided to abstain from this vote.
- Only PC goes to Administrative Hearing
- What if we say no to administrative hearing? Then it goes back to Karl Cassell.
- Bob asked if with notice, can we discuss in closed session?
- Miriam stated no, only if a personnel matter and have to give notice.
- Only voting if it goes to Hearing.
- Momodu: unaware of process and may end up abstaining.
- Eric Lam summed up the process.
 - Investigator found PC and Commissioner found PC
 - Next step is to authorize Administrative Hearing
 - If vote no on Administrative Hearing then the decision rests with Karl Cassell.
- What is the downside of Admin hearing? Cost, each commissioner who votes yes for Admin. Hearing is agreeing with the PC decision.
- LaSheila reiterated that investigators make recommendations, are neutral fact finders who gather evidence for each case.
- Is a motion needed?
- No, this is a regular part of our business in essence puts it on floor.
- Vote:
 - 3 yes
 - 3 no
 - 2 abstentions
 - Chair, Miriam votes yes
 - Case 3027 goes to Admin Hearing.

VI. Committee Reports

♦ Outreach Committee, Tara Youells

- This committee did not meet
- Momodu is to find place to meet in June. If unable to secure a site, we will meet in the Civil Rights office.
- Encourage new commissioners to be a part of the Outreach Committee.

♦ Personnel Committee, Nancylee Ziese

- Self - Assessment of Commission Form has been created, Stefanie will mail out the assessment.
- Stefanie will mail out the Executive Director's Assessment to commissioners for completion.
- Retreat: need to meet again to determine details.
- Commissioners e-mail Personnel committee on ideas/topics for a retreat.
- Roy said he sees this as an informal retreat with an educational piece. Diversity Focus as a contact/facilitator? Nancylee referenced setting goals and suggested Leslee Sandberg former GWAEA administrator is skilled at this and several AEA individuals were trained in doing this as a public service. She will ask Leslee if she is willing to do this.
-
- Meet in a park, pot luck following

VII. Director's Report

♦ National Fair Housing Alliance news release

- Complaint data collection

- Congratulations of Stefanie/staff

**2009 Fair Housing Trends
Report to the Civil Rights Commission
Submitted by Stefanie Robinson**

In February, our office was contacted by the *National Fair Housing Alliance* requesting housing complaint data for 2008.

They provided their report after processing data collected from 93 members, HUD and DOJ.

In 2008, there were **30,758** housing complaints filed.

In 2007, there were **27,023** complaints filed. (**3735 more in 2008**)

NFHA believes the increase is due to:

- ◆ The foreclosure crisis
- ◆ Internet advertising that violates housing laws. The majority of the ads discriminate against families with children.

Some basic details:

2008 Fair Housing Assistance Program/FHAP Discrimination complaints

36% were Race related

43% were Disability related

2008 CRCRC complaints

62% were Race related - 37/60

20% were Disability related - 12/60

- ◆ Create an Independent Fair Housing Enforcement Agency
- ◆ Improve HUD's Complaint Processing
- ◆ Improve DOJ's Complaint Processing
- ◆ Strengthen HUD's Fair Housing Initiatives Program (FHAP)
- ◆ Address Discriminatory Internet Advertising
- ◆ Affirmatively Further Fair Housing (promote inclusive and diverse communities)
- ◆ Improve Fair Lending Enforcement by HUD, DOJ, and Regulators
- ◆ Refine and Clarify the *Making Home Affordable Program* (Obama)
- ◆ Effectively Administer the Neighborhood Stabilization Program
- ◆ Pass Broad Bankruptcy Reform and Anti-Predatory Lending Legislation

Visit <http://www.nationalfairhousing.org/> for additional details

- ◆ **VISTA Program through ICRC, LaSheila Yates**
 - LaSheila is providing supervision of VISTA staff
 - One Summer VISTA and one year-long VISTA
 - \$2,000 pay to ICRC (for year long VISTA)
 - Summer VISTA, starts May 26, is a first year law student (40 hours/week)
 - Year-long VISTA, begins in July (40 hours/week)
 - The Summer Intern will work 3 days a week for 4 hours/day
 - They are to provide Community outreach and education
 - LaSheila has supervised 5 interns thus far.

- ♦ **HUD/CRCRC Issues**
 - Will receive \$58,800; \$10,000 administration.; \$6500 for trainings, with monies available if needed
 - HUD wants every paid staff member of the Civil Rights Commission to attend the 5 weeks of HUD training.
 - Performance Improvement Plan
 - 90 day, looking at extending it 2 months because we only have one new housing case.
 - We are supplying training on housing, Fair Housing Conference in June
 - Site visit from Andrea Carson end of June/July
 - Visits all agencies

- ♦ **Fair Housing Conference on June 25**
 - Schedule of speakers will give flexibility
 - Submitted 2 grants to GCRCF to cover cost, could get a nice portion of funds including monies for a scholarship fund.
 - Recommend commissioners come to conference as available.

- ♦ **CRCRC Community Involvement**
 - Neighborhood walk 5/21/09 at 5:30 - 6:30pm for food, 6:30 walk begins. Recommend commissioners attend the walk
 - Tom Meade - Dept. of Justice
 - Read about Community Forum and their concern included racial profiling.
 - Interested in issues in Cedar Rapids and Iowa City
 - Karl and Tom meet again next week
 - Tom hopes to meet with the Chief of Police
 - Nancy Lee – envisioned a project to get together small groups of people at local churches, no more than 8 to a group for a dinner. Get to know each other, with a diverse group of people, police, and commissioners. Met with Police Chief with this idea. If interested in participating in this, contact Nancy Lee

- ♦ **Exploring Innovation Conference (Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis)**
 - Community Development theme
 - “Brooklyn Matters” documentary – Commission purchase and review.
 - Miriam suggested we show the Documentary during the Fair Housing Conference, during lunch possibly?
 - Economic Development around “Affordable Housing”
 - Post – flood issues and development in Cedar Rapids
 - Karl won 1st place in the “Fed Prize” Challenge
 - \$2,400 Neighbor Works Conference in Chicago Aug. 17-21
 - By July 1, lay out visions and goals
 - Predatory lending is a priority (educate people)

- ♦ Tara asked if have questions on a case and the investigator is on vacation, what is the procedure? Karl will contact investigator and see if investigator could contact commissioners.

VIII. Public Response

Chair: called for public response. There was none.

Eric commented that he appreciates and thanks the Commission staff and the work they do. A round of applause was given to the staff.

IX. Adjournment

Roy Porterfield made a motion to adjourn the meeting
Tara Second
Motion carries; the meeting was adjourned at 7:00pm

The next meeting will be held on June 17, 2009 at 4:30 p.m. Location to be determined.

Respectfully submitted by Stefanie Robinson