

**CEDAR RAPIDS CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
August 19, 2009**

Commissioners met on August 19, 2009 at 4:30pm
Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission office
425 Second Street SE, Suite 960
Cedar Rapids, IA 52401

Commissioners Present: Ms. Miriam Amer, Chair
Ms. NancyLee Ziese
Mr. Rick Zingher
Mr. Anthony Arrington
Mr. Bob Rush
Ms. Laura O’Leary
Mr. Momodu Kamara
Mr. George Holmes (arrived at 5:20)
Dr. Ruth White

Commissioners Absent: Mr. Eric Lam
Mr. Kavi Parupally

Staff Present: Mr. Darryl Lipscomb, Investigator
Ms. LaSheila Yates, Investigator
Ms. Stefanie Robinson, Administrative Assistant II
Ms. Shylo Bundy, Vista volunteer

Guests: Mr. Robin Kash, Neighborhood News
Mr. Spencer Willems, Gazette

Please note: Director Karl Cassell is at a Conference in Chicago this week.

I. Call to Order

Noting a quorum, Miriam Amer, Chair, called the meeting to order precisely at 4:30p.m.

II. Roll Call

Commissioners, staff, and guests related names.

III. Approval of Minutes

NancyLee Ziese moved to approve the minutes from the July 15, 2009 regular meeting.
Bob Rush seconded the motion.
The minutes were passed unanimously.

IV. Old Business

- *Ordinance Revisions Status Report, Michelle Olmstead and Shylo Bundy*
 - Michelle and Shylo are working on community workshops.
 - Need commissioner volunteers to speak on specific topics in the new ordinance. Asking that they attend workshops and answer questions.
 - In process of gathering list of stake holders

- *Update on Office Lease, Bob Rush*
 - We have for months been requesting specific data regarding pass through costs that we are obligated to pay under the lease. We have not received any response from our landlord.
 - Karl is in contact with City Attorney and City Manager regarding situation. Looking for time to meet and discuss the situation.
 - Work with city regarding long term office space.
 - Laura asked about previous idea to withhold funds until receive information.
 - Bob replied that we may prefer to go into a closed session about our legal recourse.
 - Pass through costs: under terms of lease certain costs are built into the lease. We wish to see the details and have not received those yet. Remodeling and furniture costs: have we received the products? Costs which include basic costs of condo association fees. Have not seen documentation on this. As a tenant we are entitled to this information.

- *Commission Retreat, Momodu Kamara*
 - Outreach Committee took responsibility for this.
 - In going through feedback of Self Assessment of the Commission he did not see enthusiasm regarding a retreat.
 - Miriam is asking that it be done. We need to at least have some kind of team building activity.
 - Rick stated that in a Retreat we talk about internal issues. Privately, not open to the public. An opportunity to discuss processes and our group dynamics.
 - Bob stated that we are a public agency so we are open to open meeting rules
 - Commission: Polling on what day is good for Commissioners and then select location. Team building and like it to go forward as quickly as possible.
 - If Outreach doesn't want to handle this issue – it will be moved to staff
 - Momodu made a motion that staff members be responsible for the planning of the Commissioner Retreat
 - Rick seconded motion
 - Motion carried, Staff will responsible for the planning of the Commissioner Retreat.

- *Commission Vision and Goals for year, handout*
 - No discussion at this time.

V. **New Business**

- *Revising Rules of Operation, Bob Rush*
 - Bob stated he agreed to look at the rules and asks for ideas regarding
 - He not gone forward as we are waiting on Revised Ordinance issues.
 - Miriam stated that these rules are about how we operate internally and does it intersect with Ordinance.
 - Nancylee said that the rules are not consistent with ordinance. (e.g., Term limits)
 - Anthony asked is it our goal to align our rules with the city ordinance?
 - Michelle stated that U of I did recommend updating the rules of operation in conjunction with the updating of the ordinance. (Correlating numbers)
 - Bob said that last revision was March 31, 2006. he encourages all commissioners to read the rules and suggest changes necessary. If see inconsistencies or suggestions send to Bob as soon as possible.
 - Some area to improve: Role of Commissioner and chair, term limits, missed meetings.
 - Ruth stated that aligning what we have with what the city has should not be a huge task. Should this be assigned to a committee? Reported to group for approval by a committee.
 - Bob stated that as a Commission, we have not always followed our own rules and we need to have the commitment to follow rules. Requires that they receive feedback prior to meetings.
 - Anthony is willing to be on committee to work on rules of operation.

- This topic has been set aside for quite a while and needs to be addressed
 - NancyLee: Item for retreat? Come to the retreat with the ideas.
 - We are not being consistent with our own rules.
 - Nominating committee for chair and vice chair positions. (will be placed on the September agenda for discussion)
 - Rick Zingher asked what happens if a committee does not work well? This needs to be addressed in the rules of operation and in the retreat.
- *Discussion: Commissioners' Evaluation Results, NancyLee Ziese*
 - Review of Self Assessment form
 - Mostly positive responses
 - Need for annual retreat
 - Need for Commissioner mentors (this is now in place)
 - Commission decisions: possible item to discuss in retreat
 - Cultivate future leaders: possible item to discuss in retreat
 - Chair - positive response
 - Executive Director – positive response
 - Comment: staff and commissioners are now able to focus on primary objectives
 - Ruth stated that it sounds as though there are some internal issues; we are all committed to the Civil Rights Commission but not necessarily each other. This circles back to the need for a retreat. Internal issues can undermine the true issues of the community.
 - Miriam stated that need to be able to work together and need to get to know each other as individuals.
 - NancyLee said that if commissars disagree, we would hope we don't feel uncomfortable saying we disagree.
 - *Dare I Drive Down Bever Avenue? A Discussion on Racism in Cedar Rapids, Rick Zingher*
 - We tend to stay on the surface instead of talking about what really is going on in Cedar Rapids.
 - Observations: we all operate in different sub-cultures. Share observations.
 - "A Nature of Prejudice" – with increase in diversity we can reduce categorical thinking but may increase racial thinking.
 - Rick Zingher asked a college class that he teaches about their response to this book. (100% Caucasian involved in discussion)
 - Students told stories about their perception that Cedar Rapids is becoming a more frightening place due to increase in African American population. Seeing anxiety.
 - This is a teachable moment: some students have experienced racism and are seeing more racism in their selves.
 - NancyLee stated that her College classes are at least 30% African American. Students are recognizing that each generation they are becoming more diverse.
 - NancyLee believes racial profiling occurs in Cedar Rapids.
 - Bob asked what is the definition of racial profiling.
 - NancyLee responded that if a group of African-Americans are gathered, they are talked to by police. If a group of Caucasians were gathered, she does not believe they would be talked to by police.
 - Ruth has seen fear of some people going into certain neighborhoods in Cedar Rapids.
 - We need *awareness* of racism v. *living* in racism: Proponent of Cultural Competency training.
 - Limited interaction between races still occurs sometimes.
 - Anthony believes that Cultural competency is very relevant. Many people do not understand different culture; fears of cultures, afraid to communicate with other cultures. Sees a lot of hidden racism and fear.

- Laura stated that with landlords you see issues all over the spectrum.
- Momodu said that he agrees with Dr. White regarding cultural competency issue. We need to increase awareness but how do we make this widespread? How do we reach the general public? Education, awareness, and understanding need to be out there to the general public. It is an issue worth confronting and we as the CR Civil Rights is the best to confront this.
- George: Cultural competency goes both ways. Need to communicate what is important.
- Cultural Competency encompasses a broad spectrum: people presume you are talking about race but it also includes disabilities. Ability to perceive things in different ways.
- Rick said the he does not want any comments to be misconstrued about students in his class. He appreciate the classes' ability to be honest with their perceptions and experiences.
- We are a nation of cowards in talking about race: Eric Holder

Anthony left: 5:40

Momodu left: 5:50

VI. Committee Reports

- Outreach – none
- Personnel – reported earlier in the meeting regarding the Commission Self Assessment

VII. Director's Report

Analysis of Impediments (Darryl)

- Every five years it is a requirement for the City of Cedar Rapids to qualify for CDBG funds.
- The Development Department will give our department about \$50k to perform this analysis
- We will outsource to lowest bid for some work
- This is due by June 30, 2010

Financials (Darryl)

- Darryl gave a brief overview of end of the year numbers
- General budget: came in under budget
- Net revenues are under budget for the year.
- FHAP: under budget
- Expecting a fund transfer by year's end
- Overall we are doing well.
- Bob asked if the Commissioners could have an overview of budget process and various accounts.
- The Budget Committee will share full budget spreadsheets with Commissioners on a Quarterly basis. (next will be October)

Case Reports (Darryl) handout

Iowa League of Human Rights (Michelle)

- Thursday, October 1 - Des Moines.
 - Encouraged to attend Commissioner training 10:00 – 2:00
 - Annual League meeting 2:00 – 3:30
 - RSVP to Stefanie by September 25

RECCR Conference (Michelle)

- October 14-16 in Kansas City
- Let Stefanie know if you can attend.
- Conference will not be in the hotel - but will be in an Exhibition Hall
- We have not received any more details

Ordinance Progress (Michelle & Shylo)

- Addressed earlier in the Commission meeting

Outreach Efforts (LaSheila)

- CRCRC and the interns: canvassing and maintaining booths at these events
 - Resource Fair
 - National Night Out

Civil Rights in City Hall (Stefanie)

- Currently meeting w/OPN Architects to structure square footage recommendations
- Open Houses for public feedback on options
- City Manager is encouraging us relocate to City Hall
- About 18-24 months away
- We may have a gap between the end of our lease and availability/completion of the new City Hall.

VIII. Public Response

- Robin requested documents as distributed to commissioners
- Robin stated that he resonated with the discussion on race. He is deeply saddened by the race relations in our city of Cedar Rapids.

Discussion

- August 5th - Editorial by Karl Cassell in the Gazette
- August 11th – very positive letter to editor about Karl’s article
 - It is nice to receive positive feedback
- Next month: NancyLee will speak on Gender

IX. Adjournment

NancyLee made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

George seconded the motion.

Motion carries; the meeting was adjourned at 6:12 p.m.

The next meeting will be held on September 16, 2009 at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Stefanie Robinson