

CEDAR RAPIDS CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION  
Second Floor, Veterans Memorial Building  
29 August 2007

Commissioners and staff met for the regular meeting of the Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission at Noon, Wednesday, 29 August 2007, in the Conference Room, Ecumenical Community Center, 1035 Third Avenue SE, Cedar Rapids, Iowa. A quorum was recognized.

Commissioners Present:        Mr. Roy Porterfield, Chair  
   Ms. Miriam Amer  
   Mr. Virgil Gooding  
   Mr. George Holmes  
   Ms. Janet Johnson  
   Mr. Momodu Kamara  
   Ms. Tara Youells  
   Ms. Nancy Ziese

Commissioners Absent:        Ms. Beth Freeman, Vice Chair  
   Mr. Kavi Parupally  
   Ms. Dolores Reisinger

Staff Present:                    Mr. Kenneth White, Director  
   Ms. Jan Alderton, Investigator  
   Ms. Christina Larsen, Staff Administrative Assistant

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Noting a quorum, Roy Porterfield, Chair, called the meeting to order at 12:05 PM.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Janet Johnson motioned to approve the minutes to the July 25, 2007 Commission meeting as printed with Tara Youells seconding the motion. The minutes were approved as printed by unanimous voice vote.

### **PARLIMENTARY PROCEDURE**

Janet reviewed the formal definition of Point of Personal Privilege:

1. A point of personal privilege is a comment addressing a personal need. It has to do with the person's rights as an individual. For example, if you are having trouble breathing because the ventilation system in the room isn't working properly, it's appropriate to bring that to the attention of the chair using a point of personal privilege.
2. Another kind of personal privilege is when someone has described your position on an issue (by naming you specifically) and has misstated your viewpoint. If this happens, it's appropriate to correct it using a point of personal privilege. If, however, a speaker in debate says something about a general group, like NOW members, it's not appropriate in that case to respond using a point of personal privilege.
3. It can also be use to address disorderly conduct by a member such as making personal remarks about another member.

Roy Porterfield reviewed the informal definition as used in Pennsylvania: “any member may, by leave of the speaker, rise and explain a matter personal to the member, but the member shall not discuss a pending question in the explanation”.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **TRAILWAYS CORRESPONDENCE**

After brief discussion, the below text was motioned for approval to send to Trailways management by Janet with Nancy Ziese seconding the motion. Roy and Kenneth White will sign the letter and the Commission will follow up with Trailways in a period of approximately 30 days.

Dolores Reisinger, a member of the Cedar Rapids Commission, has brought to the Commission's attention the problems she experienced while using Burlington Trailways. After hearing of Dolores' experience and your willingness to correct the problem, we would like to assist you in this effort by offering the following review and recommendation on behalf of low-vision and blind patrons who travel on the Trailways Transportation System.

While a sighted person can observe the proper loading and transfer of their bags when boarding a commercial bus, a blind person riding the same bus has no way of verifying that their luggage has actually been loaded on the bus. And while the proper arrival of personal belongings at the end of a journey is of utmost importance to any traveler, it may be even more so to a blind or low-vision person.

We know that it is the desire of Trailways to provide peace of mind for all their patrons and, in particular, for low-vision or blind individuals. We, therefore, make the following recommendation for a 'reasonable accommodation', according to Iowa Code, for blind and low-vision patrons who travel on Trailways Transportation System.

The Commission would recommend that a policy be adopted that any blind or low-vision customer be personally notified, if so desired, by a representative of Trailways Transportation System once their luggage has been securely loaded on the bus. This simple but crucial step can provide the desired peace of mind for a blind patron that their luggage will arrive safely with them at the end of their journey, empowering them to utilize the Trailways system with effectiveness and confidence.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter and your willingness to the necessary steps to accommodate the needs of this group of travelers who depend on your fine service.

### **COMMISSION OBJECTIVES/ACTIVITIES**

The Commission briefly reviewed the new director's responsibilities that were presented at the May 2007 meeting:

I propose that each New Commissioner choose to receive specialized training and become an EXPERT in at least one protected activity. This would greatly increase the pool of knowledgeable volunteer speakers and presenters. I would expect the end result would increase the visibility of the Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission (CRCRC) in the community. To accomplish this end, I propose we take a see one, do

one and teach one approach.

- o In first year of a Commissioner term, they would see a presentation of a protected activity.
- o In the second year the Commissioner could speak at a luncheon or lead a presentation at an event.
- o In the third year, they could train a new Commissioner on a protected activity.

I propose the (CRCRC) conduct an annual review of the Executive Director.

I propose the (CRCRC) write a written plan with the following benchmarks to direct the new Executive Director.

- o The written plan will have the Executive Director actively pursue an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission contract for an additional revenue stream and staff advancement opportunities.
- o The written plan will have the Executive Director conduct an annual review of the staff.
- o The (CRCRC) will monitor and measure the following activities. These activities are probably already listed in the job description of the Executive Director. These activities will be included in the Directors monthly report. These activities will include but are not limited to:
  - Attending a luncheon as a speaker with a goal of once (1) a week.
  - Present educational forums with a goal of three hrs (3) a month.
  - Submit an editorial for publication in the Gazette promoting a protected activity with a goal one of (1) a month. The editorials could use the pretext of municipal budget cuts to make the editorials newsworthy. Promoting a different protected activity each month will keep the editorials fresh. Staying on message, limiting the educational outreach to protected activities will be viewed as 100% favorable.

Kenneth stated that we should not solely require luncheons but meetings/speeches, etc as well. George Holmes noted that he is attempting to obtain information from an RECCR speaker on ADA issues that might help with Commissioner training. Kenneth stated that we should start training with the ADA material George is trying to obtain and the staff would provide further materials, training, etc. He added that the Commissioners can choose the rate of speed, speaking engagements, etc. noting that all Commissioners should be able to give a general presentation.

Janet asked Kenneth how he sees the staff's role in the Commissioner's expertise item. Kenneth responded that the staff can do the research and provide the Commissioners options on what material they receive and what they would like to use. The staff would also provide coordination and funding for that training.

Janet asked if there can be one protected activity reviewed each month at the Commission meeting. It was decided that Roy and Janet will discuss thoughts to achieve this and bring ideas to the September meeting.

Tara suggested also pairing a new Commissioner with an established Commissioner/mentor prior to their first meeting.

#### COMMERCIAL ON LOCAL TV STATIONS

NancyLee motioned to let the staff take assume full authority and responsibility of the commercials with Virgil Gooding seconding. The motion passed via unanimous voice vote.

#### CULTURAL DIVERSITY COMPENTENCY SUBCOMMITTEE

It was noted that the subcommittee has not met since their email was sent to Commissioners. The material from the email will be discussed in greater detail at the September Commission meeting. Darryl Lipscomb is to schedule a meeting of the subcommittee members prior to that meeting.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

##### COMMISSIONER FINDINGS

Roy noted that he has received inquiries from Commissioners regarding policy on case findings. He stated that if Commissioners have any issues (writing, decision, research, etc), they should contact the investigator directly. Roy reminded Commissioners that they need to get the case findings back quickly, hopefully within one week.

##### STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

Roy clarified that Commissioners should route their routine communication with staff through him versus contacting staff directly. Once he receives notice, Roy will communicate with the director and the director will communicate with staff. It was noted that Commissioners do have the right to communicate with anyone they wish, this is a suggestion when appropriate.

##### MEET THE BLIND MONTH ACTIVITIES

Janet updated the Commission that Dolores Reisinger has eight activities scheduled during the month of October including the "Meet the Blind" day at Lindale Mall. Janet motioned for the Commission to formally endorse the Lindale Mall event with NancyLee seconding the motion. The motion to formally endorse the event passed by unanimous voice vote.

##### MISCELLANEOUS

Virgil briefly updated the Commission on the State of Iowa activities as they are making some strong moves in the mental health field towards requiring attention be paid to addressing the diverse population in the state and delivering services in a culturally competent manner noting that they have inserted language to that effect in the federal mental health block grant application. He added that he was a primary author of the new language added. He also suggested that this is an issue the Commission should pay greater attention to as well.

#### **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Kenneth briefly discussed minor changes in intake process as well as this year's positive annual HUD review results. He noted that he has completed EEOC investigator training and is currently pursuing an EEOC contract. Kenneth also stated that he has drafted a letter of

introduction that he will send to community leaders as well as the Commission. He noted that the staff is researching and pursuing new office space that will assist the Commission in holding meetings, confidentiality in the complaint process, allowing the staff to work together in the same office space, among other pluses while allowing Commission business to be performed in a more desirable location. The overwhelming response from the Commissioners was positive and mostly stated as "it is about time".

Jan Alderton briefed the Commission on the RECCR activities and noted that she has made and contributed an afghan to the NAACP.

Tara motioned to adjourn with Janet seconding the motion. The meeting adjourned by unanimous voice vote at 1:18 PM.

**NEXT MEETING**

The next regular meeting will be at Noon, Wednesday, 26 September 2007, in the Ecumenical Center conference room.

Respectfully submitted,

Christina Larsen  
Administrative Assistant III