

CEDAR RAPIDS CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION
Second Floor, Veterans Memorial Building
27 June 2007

Commissioners and staff met for the regular meeting of the Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission at 4:30 PM, Wednesday, 27 June 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. Beth Freeman, Vice Chair
 Ms. Miriam Amer
 Mr. Virgil Gooding
 Mr. George Holmes
 Ms. Janet Johnson
 Mr. Momodu Kamara
 Mr. Kavi Parupally
 Ms. Dolores Reisinger
 Ms. Tara Youells

Commissioners Absent: Ms. Sharon Carmody-Holmes

Staff Present: Ms. Jan Alderton, Investigator
 Ms. Christina Larsen, Staff Administrative Assistant
 Mr. Darryl Lipscomb, Investigator

Guests: Mr. Jim Walker, KWKB TV
 Mr. Adam Belz, Gazette Communications

Noting a quorum, Roy Porterfield, Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:35 PM.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Janet Johnson motioned to approve the minutes to the May 23, 2007 Commission meeting as printed with Beth Freeman seconding the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

GUEST

Noting the time restrictions on Jim Walker's schedule, Roy questioned if any Commission objected to revising the agenda and allowing Mr. Walker to present to the Commission. With no objections, Mr. Walker addressed the Commission.

Mr. Walker has been working with office staff to design television commercials for both employment as well as housing discrimination. He discussed the pricing packages available also explaining that all production would be handled by the station at no charge to the Commission. He noted that one of the benefits of advertising with KWKB is that the City's logo will appear on the KWKB website with a link to our department section of the City's website during the time that our commercial(s) run. The housing commercial would be the same one that has run nationally with our local contact information scripted at the end versus the federal information. The second commercial, for employment, would have to be produced and created

by the station. The discussion ensued regarding the potential of the Commissioners “acting” in the employment commercial. The Commissioners reviewed the text scripts from the commercials and viewed the housing commercial on a laptop.

Regarding the housing discrimination video:

George Holmes suggested doing two separate commercials at 30 seconds each using different accents for each to double the impact. Beth noted we should check with the Fair Housing Council for permission to edit and for different versions that could already be available. Janet suggested that we should run the commercial in its entirety for a month then snippets in following months. Virgil Gooding stated that it somewhat discriminating because of the stereotypes portrayed. Jan Alderton suggested leaving it at 60 seconds. Miriam Amer noted that she has seen this particular commercial out of Cedar Rapids in group settings and that it was positively received though it was viewed as too short. Roy said in Kansas City it was viewed by a very diverse group and was positively received. George stated that possibly at a later date maybe the Commission should talk to Iowa City to partnership with them as the station’s reach is further than Cedar Rapids. Mr. Walker reviewed the costs of the advertising spots as: 30 second spot is \$350 and a 60 second spot is \$700. Each would run for four weeks for a total of 56 spots over the 4 weeks. Miriam suggested that the price was high. Roy asked Miriam to investigate the costs of advertising on other stations for similar spots. Kavi Parupally suggested seeing if we could get a corporate sponsor. There was brief discussion regarding the conflict of interest issue. Kavi clarified maybe a non-profit group such as Diversity Focus, NAACP, churches united, etc. Miriam suggested that we not partnership with other localities and to add “check with your local commission or the State Of Iowa” and adding the State’s toll-free number at the end with ours. Roy questioned the Commissioners if the Commission should we partner with other cities: George, Kavi, Virgil all stated their interest. Roy stated that there is enough interest to merit checking other cities or non-profit sponsors. Tara Youells suggested beginning the commercial and at the same time look into other issues so we are getting the word out there while we keep working on the issues.

Miriam is to gather information from other local stations regarding pricing comparisons. Christina Larsen is to work with other cities in viewing area as to interest in partnering. Kavi is to pursue interests with other non-profits as to sponsors. It was decided that the Commission will not run any commercial until we can get the rate information at the next meeting.

George and the Commission thanked Mr. Walker for his time.

OLD BUSINESS

PUBLIC HEARING

George asked if we could send the Respondent information regarding the last public hearing the Commission held. Roy stated it would not be appropriate. George motioned to approve public hearing with Tara seconding the motion. The motion to take the case forward to public hearing was approved by unanimous voice vote.

NEW BUSINESS

STATE APPROVAL OF CIVIL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

Roy read a letter he sent to City Attorney, James Flitz, as follows:

The Iowa General Assembly has passed and Governor Culver has signed into law S.F.427, which adds sexual orientation and gender identity as protected classes to Iowa Code 216. The law becomes effective 01 July 2007. Cedar Rapids

Chapter 69 already includes sexual orientation, but does not address gender identity.

It is my understanding that Iowa civil rights law requires all cities above 29000 population to have a municipal civil rights law that includes all protections covered by the state. If true, then our ordinance no longer meets the requirement. In any case, I personally find it unacceptable that our civil rights law is inferior to the state statute. This would put our staff in the untenable position of declining to investigate a complaint of discrimination on grounds of gender identity, despite it being law.

I would like to know the customary process for amending the City of Cedar Rapids law, and what assistance the City Attorney could offer to the Civil Rights Commission.

GAZETTE ARTICLES

George reviewed two articles as they appeared in the Cedar Rapids Gazette regarding discrimination in credit and healthcare.

NEW COMMISSION DIRECTOR

Roy mentioned that Kenneth White, new Commission director, will tentatively begin his duties 16 July 2007. Kavi thanked the hiring committee for their hard work during this process.

MISCELLANEOUS

The process and definition of "personal privilege" were discussed briefly.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The May case report showed 4 closed cases (3 employment, 1 housing). Six new cases were filed in May (3 employment, 2 housing, 1 public accommodations).

Beth moved to adjourn the meeting with George seconding the motion. By unanimous vote, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 5:50 PM.

NEXT MEETING

The next regular meeting will be at Noon, Wednesday, 25 July 2007, in the Ecumenical Center conference room.

Respectfully submitted,

Christina Larsen
Administrative Assistant III