

CEDAR RAPIDS CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION
Second Floor, Veterans Memorial Building
13 September 2007

Commissioners and staff met for the special meeting of the Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission at Noon, Thursday, September 13, 2007, in the Council Chambers of the City of Cedar Rapids City Hall, 50 Second Avenue Bridge, 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
 Ms. Nancy Lee Ziese

Commissioners Absent: Ms. Beth Freeman, Vice Chair
 Mr. Momodu Kamara
 Mr. Kavi Parupally
 Ms. Dolores Reisinger
 Ms. Tara Youells

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

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

OFFICE SPACE/LEASE

Roy began the meeting stating that this meeting is in follow-up to the discussion that began at previous Commission meeting. Roy noted the Gazette article that appeared on 09/06/07 regarding the potential move and office space.

Kenneth White addressed the Commission stating that this is a time issue noting the staff has spent a lot of time searching for office space. The current office space is dysfunctional as there is no confidentiality for staff or people who come in to file a complaint, the intake office we currently have is inadequate and no air circulation, his office has loud venting which makes hearing incredibly hard, and Jan Alderton is at the Ecumenical Center. He noted that the first staff office meeting was held at the Chamber of Commerce because we do not have adequate space which, in turn, resulted in closing both offices for that timeframe.

Janet Johnson inquired if the Ecumenical Center is going to be sold? Roy stated that it is extremely likely as the owners are supposed to sign a letter of intent next week to sell the property.

Kenneth informed the Commissioners that the staff has searched the city looking for office space to fill our needs for a minimal amount of money. At GTC, we would be getting about 3,000 sq ft. at \$5/sq ft. He noted that the Commission is not asking the City for any additional

monies, we are paying all from external costs. He also stated that the staff is looking at a three-year lease with the options for additional years and noted that we have to make a decision within the first year if we want the space for five years vs. the three.

Kenneth continued that one great aspect is that the GTC is on the ground floor of this building which will be beneficial to citizens along with skywalks, parking lots and parking ramps. He stated that wants to put a new face on the Civil Rights Commission wanting us to look like we are serious about what we do. He briefly reviewed with the Commission comments from visitors about our offices including a HUD representative, local attorneys, etc. Kenneth stated that in the new space, we will have: a conference room, about 8 offices (one which would be designated as a Commissioner office), two training rooms, a large reception room, and a break room. He also noted that the staff has had other offers from other companies in the GTC building about other space available at \$12/sq ft.

Nancylee Ziese asked what the cost of moving would be. Kenneth replied that we are not sure yet noting that staff is just moving files. He stated that we are looking into a turnkey lease where they supply the furniture that would be amortized in the lease which also includes remodeling (counting a wider doorway, new carpeting, newly painted walls, and restroom doors will be all powered).

Roy informed the Commission that the Arenson Law Firm owns the floor where we would be located, we would be renting from them. Roy stated they have standards regarding physical appearance that we must abide to therefore they are choosing the furniture.

Miriam Amer questioned if the cost of the furniture included in the lease quoted? Kenneth replied no, it would be additional but amortized throughout the lease. Miriam questioned who would pay for the costs. Kenneth stated it would be HUD funds.

Miriam questioned who would pay utilities? Kenneth replied that it is our intent to encumber all costs for the first three years out of the HUD account. Miriam noted that it would probably be an additional \$10,000 per year for the utilities and the furniture. Kenneth replied that information was correct. He noted that the Commission has \$300,000 in the FHAP account with another \$40,000 that we were approved for with another \$125,000 potential later this year.

Roy noted that the City bus system is already on the first floor, so the city phone and network system is already in the building. Nancylee questioned if the offices would keep the same phone number? Roy replied yes.

Kenneth noted that he discussed this situation and proposal with Myrtle Wilson, our HUD representative, in advance and has obtained a letter from her stating that we can use those funds for the office space.

Roy stated that the Chair would entertain a motion where the Commission orders the Director to lease the space in GTC. George Holmes motioned for the order with Nancylee seconded.

Nancylee questioned the timeframe for the move. Kenneth stated that we have to obtain a new lease offer as the previous one has expired though he does not see that as a problem.

Roy explained that the City Mayor and City Council want a clear indication that this is Commission intent and is a good idea. There was brief discussion regarding the City process of

accounting and Council approval. Roy noted that we hope to get a vote to get on agenda on the 19th and are hoping for action on 26th.

Nancylee questioned if the City Council supported this move? Roy stated that the Audit Department is already looking at our space as is the Human Resources Department. Kenneth stated that staff has talked to the other City building managers and there is no space available.

Nancylee moves to question. In a vote of the Commission, those voting in against: Miriam, Janet, George. Those voting in favor of the call: Nancylee and Virgil. The motion failed.

Miriam stated that she has talked to the staff members and there are a number of personality problems in the office and she worries about the personality conflicts within the staff whether having them all in the same office would be viable. George stated his view is this is a separate issue from the lease and should be handled by the Director. The majority of Commissioners agreed. Roy also stated that it is inevitable that with the sale of the ecumenical center, the staff will be in the same location.

Kenneth stated that taking into consideration some of the expectations the Commission has set for him, it would be difficult to accomplish these under separate roofs. The current facilities do not work for us as it is difficult to oversee such a valuable program as housing offsite.

The motion to order the Director to lease the space in GTC carried unanimously by voice vote.

Virgil Gooding motioned to adjourn with Nancylee seconding the motion. The meeting adjourned by unanimous voice vote at 12:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Christina Larsen
Administrative Assistant III