

**PENNSYLVANIA HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
MINUTES OF COMMISSION MEETING
FEBRUARY 22, 2016**

The meeting convened at 1:15 PM, Monday, February 22, 2016 at Lehigh County Government Center, 17 S 7th Street, Allentown, PA.

ATTENDANCE:

Commissioners present:

Gerald S. Robinson, Chairman
Dr. Raquel O. Yiengst, Vice Chairperson
Dr. Radheshyam Agrawal (phone)
Joel Bolstein (phone)
George Dawson
Kathleen Dormer-Carusone

Commissioners Absent:

Hon. Terence Farrell
Varsovia Fernandez
Meron Yemane (excused)

Staff present:

JoAnn Edwards, Executive Director
Tammy McElfresh, Special Assistant to the Executive Director
Kathy Morrison, Chief Counsel
John Clark, Director of Enforcement
Geoffrey Biringer, Director of Education and Community Services
Christina Reese, Press Secretary
Heather Roth, Harrisburg Regional Office Director
Carl Summerson, Hearing Examiner
Debbie Walters, Administrative Officer
Morgan Williams, Acting Pittsburgh Regional Office Director

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Robinson called the meeting to order 1:15 PM. He further announced that the meeting had been advertised and was open to the public, in accordance with the provisions of the Sunshine Act. He stated that prior to the meeting, in keeping with the confidentiality requirements of the Sunshine Act; there had been a closed session to discuss compliance matters.

Chairman Robinson announced the meeting was being recorded.

Attendance was taken and the presence of a quorum was noted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Chairman Robinson asked that the guests introduce themselves and indicate the agency or organization they are here to represent. PHRC staff then introduced themselves.

APPROVAL OF COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Minutes of the January Public Commission held on February 5, 2016, due to a winter weather event, were presented for approval.

MOTION:

Commissioner Yiengst made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Dawson to approve the minutes with no changes and with all in favor, motion carried.

CHIEF COUNSEL'S LITIGATION STATUS REPORT

Chief Counsel Morrison provided a review of her status report and a copy is attached for review. Ms. Morrison also provided in her report an outline of work done by the legal staff and trainings they have conducted.

Chief Counsel Morrison provided an update on the Swim Club cases for the benefit of the visitors in attendance.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Executive Director Edwards welcomed the visitors and extended her appreciation to them for their support and partnership with the PHRC.

Notification of Personnel Actions

Executive Director JoAnn Edwards presented the attached personnel transactions from the month of February.

Ms. Edwards asked commissioners to refer to their packets for other personnel actions.

Report on the Budget

Executive Director Edwards provided an update on the current budget situation.

Report of Education and Community Services Division

Director of Education and Community Services Geoffrey Biringer provided an update on current outreach activities and an overview of the division for visitors.

Director Biringer explained the purpose of the Education Equity Program and our goal for all students to have the same opportunities.

Report on EEOC and HUD Contracts

The monthly and year-to-date reports contain specifics and are attached.

Director Clark provided a comparison of the case numbers in the HUD and EEOC reports. PHRC has closed 94 HUD cases through January 31st and is ahead of the projected closure goal and is slightly behind at 82% of the 1st Quarter goal for EEOC case closures.

The monthly HUD report was provided in the commission packet for review in advance of the meeting.

Director Clark also discussed the partnerships being established with local HRCs. Currently PHRC has reached out to four local HRCs to create MOUs to partner with them and ensure they understand the process and data sharing benefits.

Mediation

The monthly Mediation report was provided in the commission packet for review.

An overview of the Mediation Program was provided to visitors by Director Clark.

Report of Press Secretary

Press Secretary Christina Reese provided an overview of her position and current media activities.

STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

An update on the Strategic Plan was by Executive Director Edwards for the benefit of visitors. Also noted were the implications of an aged case inventory and the decrease realized through the Strategic Plan.

NEXT SESSION

The March Commission meeting will be held Monday, March 28, 2016, at 1:00 PM in Harrisburg, PA.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Executive Director Edwards stated she was approached after the previous meeting by staff members who had heard about staff members being permitted to speak directly with commissioners and indicated their interest in also being permitted time to speak with commissioners.

GUEST COMMENTS

Carlos Lopez of Bethlehem, PA expressed an interest to be on the Advisory Council and urged sharing of best practices. Mr. Lopez also inquired about inviting Dauphin County Commissioners to work with their county commissioners.

Jose Molina thanked the PHRC commissioners for partnering with and coming to Allentown to provide the opportunity for those to speak. Mr. Molina mentioned the need for an evening meeting to make it easier for students, parents and school district staff to attend.

Holly Edinger, resident of the area, stated equity in education comes down to funding. What is spent on a student in rural versus city schools? The poverty rate has a huge impact. Ms. Ettinger feel these two issues should be priority one.

Milagro Serpas, Sacred Heart Hospital, explained that health care and education go hand-in-hand. In areas with a high minority population there needs to be a cultural connection.

Lucretia Brown, Allentown School District, shared that the school district staff are attending cultural diversity trainings.

ADJOURNMENT

This meeting was recorded. The tapes are on file with the permanent record.

Commissioner Dawson made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Carusone to adjourn. With all in favor, Chairman Robinson adjourned the Public Session.

Respectfully submitted,

S\Gerald Robinson

Gerald Robinson
Chairman

S\Radheshyam Agrawal

Dr. Radheshyam Agrawal
Commissioner