

**PENNSYLVANIA HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
MINUTES OF COMMISSION MEETING
OF APRIL 22, 2019**

The meeting convened at 5:10 PM, Monday, April 22, 2019 in Hazleton, Pennsylvania.

ATTENDANCE:

Commissioners:

Joel Bolstein, Chair
Dr. Raquel O. Yiengst, Vice Chair (sick)
Mayur Patel, Secretary
Rad Agrawal (absent)
George Dawson (absent)
Kathleen Dormer
Michael Hardiman
Curtis Jones (absent)
Gerald S. Robinson (absent)
Adrian Shanker
Aleena Sorathia

Staff:

Chad Dion Lassiter, Executive Director
Martin Cunningham, Interim Chief Counsel
Jinada Rochelle, Director of Enforcement
Carl Summerson, Hearing Examiner
Lyle Wood, Pittsburgh Regional Office Director
Heather Roth, Harrisburg Regional Office Director
Diana Medley, Philadelphia Regional Office Director
Renee Martin, Director of Communications
Geoffrey Biringer, Director of Education and Community Services
Debbie Walters, Administrative Officer
Katie Petruczok, Mediation Coordinator
Reed Reynolds, Education and Community Services Division

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Bolstein called the meeting to order. The meeting had been advertised and was open to the public, in accordance with the provisions of the Sunshine Act. Prior to the meeting, in keeping with the confidentiality requirements of the Sunshine Act; there had been a closed session to discuss compliance matters.

The chair announced the meeting was being recorded. Attendance was taken and the presence of a quorum noted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Chairman Bolstein welcomed special guests in attendance and asked the commissioners and staff to introduce themselves.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES**MOTION:**

Commissioner Dormer made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Hardiman to approve the minutes of the March Commission. With all in favor, the motion carried to approve the minutes.

MANAGEMENT UPDATES

Executive Director Lassiter expressed his feelings of being humbled and honored to be here at the Hazleton One Community Center this evening and thanked everyone for coming to the meeting.

Lassiter shared with the audience that at each meeting he shares his book recommendation of the month. This month's recommendation is *Racism: A Short History*, by George Fredrickson.

Director Biringer introduced Elain Curry, Chair of the Hazleton Advisory Council who provided highlights of current events and issues before the Council.

Hearing Examiner Carl Summerson provided an updated status on MOUs and workshare agreements between PHRC and local commissions and explained for the audience what local human relations commission MOUs are and why they are needed. There are currently six in effect and four more in process.

Mediation Coordinator Katie Petruczok provided a review of the monthly report and an overview of the Mediation Program for the guests in attendance.

Executive Director Lassiter explained the Inter-Agency Taskforce, their duties and the use of townhalls as a means of PHRC becoming proactive versus reactive for situations like the Pittsburgh Synagogue shooting and issues like what is going on in Hazleton.

Director of Enforcement Jinada Rochelle reviewed the HUD and EEOC reports.

Director of Communications, Renee Martin provided highlights from the monthly report noting the issuance of the Annual Report that is available on the back table, the No Hate in our State and upcoming events such as the lecture series, sexual harassment symposium on May 17 in Philadelphia, and the Lehigh Advisory Council event in the fall. Director Martin added that additional information on events is available on the PHRC website along with forms used for filing complaints.

ADJUDICATION

Hearing Examiner Carl Summerson presented the case, Riccardi v. Harold Richard Garten for Adjudication with a high-level overview of case facts and recommendation on behalf of the complainant.

MOTION:

Commissioner Patel made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Dormer to approve the findings of facts and recommendations of the Hearing Examiner. With all in favor motion carried and recommendations ordered.

NEW BUSINESS

None

PRESENTATIONS:

Reynell Brown Staley, Esquire of the Education Law Center presented to the Commissioners, staff and guests on the topic of the Education Funding Formula. Staley's presentation explained how the current funding formula is impacting communities across the state causing systemic inequalities in education funding.

The PHRC Director of Enforcement, Jinada Rochelle and Harrisburg Regional Director, Heather Roth presented information on the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act (PHRA) and the Pennsylvania Fair Educational Opportunities Act (PFE OA) and how to file a complaint with PHRC. Rochelle and Roth provided examples of types of discrimination and violations of civil rights that residents may be experiencing and not now where to go or how to seek justice.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The public comment portion was opened by Hazleton Advisory Council Chairperson, Elaine Curry, who provided information and statistics about the Hazleton School District as well as historical and current issues being dealt with. Curry was then joined by many from the audience sharing their personal stories of situations they or their family members are facing in Hazleton with the commissioners and staff.

Chairman Bolstein expressed how this evening had been an eye-opening experience hearing from everyone and thanked them for their courage.

Executive Director Lassiter introduced Luz Colon, Executive Director of the Governor's Commission on Latino Affairs who thanked everyone for attending and assured them she is the eyes and ears to the Governor and will continue to learn more stories. Executive Director Colon urged those aggrieved to continue filing complaints and then thanked Executive Director Lassiter for the important collaboration between the Governor's Commission and the PHRC.

NEXT SESSION

The next Commission Meeting will be held Monday, May 20, 2019, at 1:30 PM in York, PA.

ADJOURNMENT

This meeting was recorded for video and sound, which will become part of the permanent record.

MOTION:

Commissioner Hardiman made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Dormer to adjourn the meeting. With all in favor, motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,



Joel Bolstein
Chairman



o/b/o Mayur Patel

Mayur Patel
Secretary