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**PENNSYLVANIA HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION**

**M I N U T E S**

TIME: 3:17 P.M.

Held at  
Honors Suite  
333 Market Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17101

June 17, 2024

Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission  
June 17, 2024

COMMISSIONERS:

Joel Bolstein, Esquire, Chair  
Dr. Raquel O. Yiengst, Vice Chair  
Mayur Patel, Esquire, Secretary - (phone)  
Dr. Rad Agrawal- (phone)  
Michael Hardiman, Esquire  
Curtis Jones  
Aleena Sorathia - Excused

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Chad Dion Lassiter, MSW

DEPUTY CHIEF COUNSEL

Morgan Williams, Esquire, (phone)

COMMISSION COUNSEL

Vacant

STAFF PRESENT:

Amanda Brothman, Director of Communications  
Desiree Chang, Director of Education  
Adrian Garcia, Director of Enforcement  
Caroline Eister, Director of Fair Housing and  
Commercial Property  
Darlene Hemerka, Esquire, Hearing Examiner-(phone)  
Tamara Shehadeh-Cope, Hearing Examiner  
Heather Roth, Regional Office Director, Harrisburg  
Robert Lindsey, Regional Office Director-(phone)  
Ashley Walkowiak, Director of Policy,  
Intergovernmental Affairs and Mediation  
LaDawn Robinson, Regional Office Director, Pittsburgh  
(phone)  
Zulay Rojas, Special Assistant to Executive Director  
(phone)  
Debbie Walters, Administrative Officer (phone)

1 ALSO PRESENT:

2 John Wong, AREAA Founding Chairman (phone)  
3 Rose Hanh Yuan, President of AREAA Philadelphia  
4 Minh Nguyen, Secretary of AREAA

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Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission

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June 17, 2024

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10 MEETING CALL TO ORDER AND OPENING STATEMENT

11 The time is now 3:17 p.m.

12

"Welcome to the public meeting of the

13

Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission. We are

14

pleased to have you join us.

15

Pursuant to Section 711 (a) of the Sunshine Act,

16

65 P.S. § 711(a), this Commission meeting may be

17

recorded by attendees. Your voluntary participation

18

in the meeting constitutes consent to be recorded.

19

The meeting has been advertised in accordance with

20

the provisions of the Sunshine Act. Prior to the

21

meeting and in keeping with the confidentiality

22

requirements of the Sunshine Act, there was a closed

23

session to discuss compliance matters, management

24

updates, and adjudicative case deliberations.

25

After concluding with the business portion of the

1 meeting, we will invite guests to introduce  
2 yourselves and any organizations you represent.  
3 Guests will have an opportunity to briefly address  
4 the Commission. We welcome your comments about equal  
5 opportunity and Civil Rights issues or problems of  
6 discrimination. Any statements expressed during the  
7 public session by members of the public represent the  
8 opinions and beliefs of the speaker and not the  
9 opinions and beliefs of the Commission.

10 We value the public's partnership in promoting  
11 equal opportunity and would love to hear about the  
12 work of organizations represented; however, the  
13 Commission cannot hear specifics of open  
14 investigations or cases they may have to rule on in  
15 the future."

16 Joel Bolstein, Esquire, Chair, convened the  
17 monthly meeting of the Pennsylvania Human Relations  
18 Commission. He noted the presence of a quorum and  
19 called the meeting to order.]

20 \*\*\*

21 ROLL CALL

22 [Commissioners present included Commissioner

1 Hardiman, Commissioner Yiengst, Commissioner Jones,  
2 Commissioner Bolstein, and Commissioners Patel and  
3 Agrawal were present on the phone.]

4 \*\*\*

5 ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

6 CHAIR BOLSTEIN:

7 Is there a motion to adopt the  
8 agenda?

9 COMMISSIONER HARDIMAN:

10 So moved.

11 COMMISSIONER JONES:

12 Second.

13 CHAIRMAN BOLSTEIN:

14 It's been moved and seconded that we  
15 adopt the agenda. Is there any  
16 discussion? Not hearing any, all  
17 those in favor please say aye? Any  
18 opposed?

19 [The motion passed unanimously.]

20 \*\*\*

21 APPROVAL OF PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

22 CHAIR BOLSTEIN:

1 We have two sets of public meetings,  
2 we have the Minutes from the April  
3 29, 2024, public meeting.

4 Is there a motion to approve  
5 those Minutes?

6 COMMISSIONER JONES:

7 So moved.

8 COMMISSIONER YIENGST:

9 Second.

10 CHAIR BOLSTEIN:

11 It was moved by Commissioner Jones,  
12 seconded by Commissioner Yiengst.  
13 Is there any discussion about the  
14 Minutes from April 29, 2024?

15 Not hearing any, all those in  
16 favor please say aye? Any opposed?

17 {The motion passed unanimously.}

18 \*\*\*

19 CHAIR BOLSTEIN:

20 We have the public meeting Minutes  
21 from May 20, 2024. I need a motion  
22 to approve that. Can I get one from

1 Commissioner Jones?

2 COMMISSIONER JONES:

3 So moved.

4 CHAIR BOLSTEIN:

5 And a second from Commissioner

6 Yiengst?

7 COMMISSIONER YIENGST:

8 Second.

9 CHAIR BOLSTEIN:

10 Any discussion? All those in favor

11 of the motion to approve those

12 Minutes please say aye? Any

13 opposed?

14 [The motion passed unanimously.]

15 \*\*\*

16 ADJUDICATIONS-RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSED FINAL

17 ORDERS

18 CHAIR BOLSTEIN:

19 We have an adjudication which is

20 Doricelle M. Serrano vs. The Reading

21 Housing Authority, PHRC Case No.

22 202002589. We have in front of us

1 Proposed Findings of Fact,  
2 Conclusions of Law, an Opinion and  
3 Recommendation of the Hearing  
4 Examiner and a Final Order.

5 I would ask the Hearing  
6 Examiner or Commissioner Yiengst to  
7 just give us a brief summary of the  
8 case and then we'll take a motion.

9 RECOMMENDATION

10 [Hearing Examiner Tamara Shehadeh-Cope noted  
11 Complainant filed a complaint with PHRC, Case No.  
12 202002589 on or about June 7, 2021. The Complainant  
13 alleged that Respondent discriminated against  
14 Complainant on the basis of her disability by denying  
15 her reasonable accommodation request for an  
16 accessible parking space. Respondent filed a timely  
17 Answer denying the allegations set forth in the  
18 complaint.

19 Following a finding of Probable Cause and Failure  
20 to Conciliate, a public hearing was held in this  
21 matter in Lebanon County, Pennsylvania, on November  
22 8, 2023, with Commissioner Raquel Yiengst presiding.

1 Complainant's allegation of discrimination  
2 centers upon the fact that she had requested a  
3 reasonable accommodation and had been placed on a  
4 resident's waiting list in August of 2018, yet did  
5 not receive an accessible space until May 2022. This  
6 is because pursuant to the existing parking policy,  
7 waiting list positions are assigned on a first come,  
8 first served basis, and no exception to the order was  
9 made for an individual requesting a reasonable  
10 accommodation.

11 Thus, waited for a parking space for almost five  
12 years during which time no fewer than six individuals  
13 who had not requested an accommodation received a  
14 parking space before her.

15 The Hearing Commissioner finds that Complainant  
16 has met her burden in establishing that Respondent  
17 denied her necessary and reasonable accommodations in  
18 violation of Section 5(h)34.2 of the PHRA. The  
19 Hearing Commissioner also finds that Respondent has  
20 failed to meet its burden in showing that  
21 Complainant's accommodation request was unreasonable.

22 The Hearing Commissioner recommended the

1 following: Respondent cease and desist from denying  
2 reasonable accommodations to tenants who have  
3 followed Respondent's reasonable accommodation  
4 process to request accessible parking. Within 60  
5 days of a signed order, Respondent takes Fair Housing  
6 training. Within 45 days of signed order, Respondent  
7 shall pay Complainant the lump sum of \$20,000 which  
8 amount represents compensatory damages of  
9 embarrassment suffered. And within 60 days of signed  
10 order, Respondent reports to PHRC on the matter of  
11 compliance with the terms of the signed order.]

12 CHAIR BOLSTEIN:

13                               Is there a motion?

14 COMMISSIONER JONES:

15                               So moved.

16 CHAIR BOLSTEIN:

17                               And a second?

18 COMMISSIONER AGRAWAL:

19                               Second.

20 CHAIR BOLSTEIN:

21                               Moved by Commissioner Jones and

22                               seconded by Commissioner Agrawal.



1 COMMISSIONER JONES:

2 I move that we deny Preliminary  
3 Request for such a motion.

4 CHAIR BOLSTEIN:

5 Is there a second?

6 COMMISSIONER YIENGST:

7 Second.

8 CHAIR BOLSTEIN:

9 So it's been moved and seconded. Is  
10 there any discussion? Not hearing  
11 any, all those in favor of the  
12 motion please say aye? Any opposed?

13 [The motion carried unanimously.]

14 \*\*\*

15 MOTIONS AND OTHER ACTIONS - N/A

16 \*\*\*

17 APPROVED FOR PUBLIC HEARING DOCKET - N/A

18 \*\*\*

19 PENNSYLVANIA LEGISLATIVE UPDATE - None

20 \*\*\*

21 INTRODUCTIONS

22 [Executive Director suggested introductions of those

1 in attendance.

2       Hearing Examiner Tamara Shehadeh-Cope introduced  
3 herself noting that she had been with the Commission  
4 since January of 2023.

5       Hearing Examiner Darlene Hemerka introduced  
6 herself noting that she has been with the Commission  
7 since April of 2022.

8       Ashley Walkowiak introduced herself as Director  
9 of Policy, Intergovernmental Affairs and Mediation.

10       Desiree Chang introduced herself as Director of  
11 Education Outreach starting in January of 2020.

12       Adrian Garcia introduced himself as Director of  
13 Enforcement for the last four years.

14       Commissioner Curtis Jones introduced himself  
15 noting he has been with the Commission for eight  
16 years.

17       Commissioner Raquel Yiengst introduced herself as  
18 Vice Chair of the Commission and has been with the  
19 Commission for 44 years.

20       Joel Bolstein introduced himself as Chair of PHRC  
21 and has been a commissioner "a little less than  
22 Commissioner Yiengst."

1           Commissioner Mayur Patel introduced himself  
2 stating he has been with the Commission for  
3 approximately eight years,

4           Commissioner Agrawal introduced himself noting he  
5 has been with the Commission for approximately ten  
6 years.

7           Morgan Williams, Esquire, Deputy Chief Counsel,  
8 has been with the Commission for ten years in July.

9           Chad Lassiter, Executive Director, has been with  
10 the Commission for five years.

11           Michael Hardiman, Esquire, Commissioner for eight  
12 years and previously worked for the Commission for 33  
13 years.

14           Heather Roth introduced herself as the Regional  
15 Director for the Harrisburg region and has been with  
16 the Commission for 11 years.

17           Robert Lindsey introduced himself as the Regional  
18 Office Director in Philadelphia and has been with the  
19 Commission since December of 2021.

20           Caroline Eister, Director of Fair Housing and  
21 Commercial Property, has been with the Commission  
22 since November of 2023.

1 Ms. Eister indicated, in November of 2023, she  
2 attended the Asian Real Estate Associate of America  
3 Greater Philadelphia Fair Housing Symposium, and  
4 Executive Director Lassiter spoke along with other  
5 leaders on the challenges facing Asian populations in  
6 attaining fair affordable housing in Pennsylvania and  
7 beyond.

8 She introduced Rose Hanh Yuan, President, and  
9 Minh Nguyen, Secretary. John Wong, Founding  
10 Chairman, was present via telephone. These members  
11 of the AREAA were present to offer some points on  
12 those concerns and presented information both in  
13 writing and virtually on the state of Asian America  
14 paper '24-'25.]

15

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16 PRESENTATION-ASIAN REAL ESTATE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA  
17 (AREAA)

18 [Ms. Yuan had discussion of the Asian Real Estate  
19 Association of America (AREAA) an organization  
20 dedicated to promoting sustainable home ownership and  
21 advocate for the interests of Asian Americans, Native  
22 Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities within the

1 real estate sector.

2 She reported the group comprises a group of  
3 approximately 120 active members across Pennsylvania.  
4 She thanked Executive Director Lassiter and Director  
5 Caroline Eister, for their support and for organizing  
6 this presentation.

7 Ms. Yuan highlighted the professional backgrounds  
8 of herself, Mr. Nguyen, and Mr. Wong.

9 Mr. Nguyen, a realtor with Keller Williams  
10 Empower, number two in the country in terms of  
11 production and number one in recruitment. He  
12 provided insights into AREAA's mission focusing on  
13 AANHPI groups within the real estate industry  
14 including a trip annually to Washington, D.C. to  
15 conduct congressional visits during AANHPI Month.

16 Mr. Nguyen submitted into the record the State of  
17 Asia America Annual Report. He noted the ability for  
18 he and his mother to come to the United States due to  
19 the 1987 Amerasian Homecoming Act.

20 He noted AREAA hosted a Fair Housing Symposium  
21 with 200 attendees, 15 vendors, 3 panels.

22 Mr. Nguyen stated the buying power of Asian

1 Americans has exceed \$1.4 trillion in the United  
2 States. He noted Pacific Islanders include 250,000  
3 eligible voters. He noted hosting the Diversity and  
4 Intersectionality panel at the symposium.

5 AREAA hosted a Diversity Fair Housing Summit in  
6 Washington, D.C. including congressional visits,  
7 workshops, and presentations.

8 He discussed AREAA's three-point policy plan  
9 composed of discrimination anti-alien land laws,  
10 financing opportunities for housing affordability,  
11 language, access, supply, and policy, as well as  
12 appraisal equity.

13 AREAA Greater Philadelphia will host 1,800 people  
14 at the Philadelphia Convention Center featuring a get  
15 out and vote campaign with AANHPI initiatives.

16 Mr. Nguyen commented, since the State of Asia  
17 America Report in late 2020, there has been an  
18 astronomical increase the rates of violence against  
19 Asian Americans and the LGBTQ group as well.

20 He called upon PHRC to administer directive to  
21 empower communities of color in their pursuit of fair  
22 housing and anti-discrimination. Digital copies of

1 archives for the State of Asia America Report will be  
2 distributed and will help to guide the work of the  
3 PHRC.

4       Mr. Wong discussed the historical and  
5 contemporary challenges posed by alien land laws and  
6 its adverse effects on AANHPI community access  
7 property for ownership. He discussed the challenges  
8 with the current administration in China. He noted  
9 the current law currently under review in  
10 Pennsylvania is HB1995, the Agricultural Land  
11 Acquisition by Aliens Act. AREAA requests that the  
12 PHRC stay alert to the evolution of this bill, and  
13 that should there be an attempt to expand it beyond  
14 the agricultural lands, PHRC pay attention to see  
15 where it might be discriminatory. Mr. Wong noted it  
16 is a violation of the Fair Housing Act to ask about  
17 your country of origin, so a seller and a real estate  
18 agent serving both parties are put into the position  
19 of either violating a state law regarding selling  
20 property to folks from certain countries or filing  
21 the Fair Housing Act. He commented, in Florida,  
22 AREAA has filed illegal action due to a law that

1 parallels to what is being considered in  
2 Pennsylvania.

3       Mr. Wong stated, secondly, another concern is a  
4 settlement that the National Association of Realtors  
5 has in a private second-class action that will result  
6 in changes in how the real estate industry works.  
7 Historically, a seller contracts with an agent and  
8 comes to an agreement on a negotiated commission. A  
9 portion of the commission that the seller's agent  
10 receives will be used to pay for the agent  
11 representing the buyer. Mr. Wong stated one of the  
12 changes in the settlement is that such information is  
13 no longer to be distributed into the multiple listing  
14 services which would result in a shift of how buyers'  
15 agents are paid. He stated Americans with whatever  
16 background would face the same challenges.

17       A question was posed as to which specific issues  
18 the PHRC could provide training and assistance on.  
19 Mr. Nguyen responded that an intergovernmental task  
20 force, recertification requirement modifications, and  
21 accountability mechanisms be put into place in order  
22 to ensure that valuation is equitable and fair for

1 all people. Redlining, gentrification, affordable  
2 housing, and supply chains also affects all, as well  
3 as predatory interest rates. Lending and  
4 internalized biases are also concerns.

5 Ms. Yuan discussed convergence areas in  
6 Pennsylvania. She noted the need for encouragement  
7 and understanding and all working together to help  
8 each other.

9 Mr. Nguyen indicated AREAA is excited to unite  
10 and build solidarity and empower all communities to  
11 raise homeownership rates.

12 Executive Director Lassiter pointed that training  
13 or series of trainings and other initiatives is  
14 something PHRC can do. He thanked AREAA for their  
15 presentation. Ms. Yuan thanked the Executive  
16 Director Lassiter, Director Eister and PHRC members  
17 for their dedication, and the enlightening  
18 contributions to the discussion. She encouraged  
19 ongoing dialog and partnership between AREAA and the  
20 PHRC to create communities where everyone has equal  
21 opportunities to thrive and contribute.]

22

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1 ADJOURNMENT

2 [The meeting adjourned at 4:10 p.m.]

3 \*\*\*

4 [The next meeting is scheduled for July 22, 2024.]

5 \*\*\*

6

7 CERTIFICATE

8

9 I hereby certify that the foregoing summary  
10 minutes of the Pennsylvania Human Relations  
11 Commission, was reduced to writing by me or under my  
12 supervision, and that the minutes accurately  
13 summarize the substance of the Pennsylvania Human  
14 Relations Commission meeting.

15



16

17 Derek Richmond,

18 Minute Clerk

19 Sargent's Court Reporting

20 Service, Inc.

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M. Joel Bolstein, Chairman



o/b/o Commissioner Mayur Patel

Mayur Patel, Secretary