

Minutes of the Cook County
Commission on Human Rights – Open Session
October 7, 2021

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Attendance:

Present: Chairperson K. Gunn; Commissioners J. Block, C. Eatherton, A. Hamada, G. Orr, A. Smock, H. Ratner, Rev. R. Tolliver, A. Waikar, S. Sohel

Staff: Director S. Baker, Legal Counsel J. King, Investigator A. Cahn, Investigator J. Jones, Investigator J. Brown, Communications and Training Coordinator J. Epplin-Zapf, Administrative Analyst K. Johns

I. Open Session

A. Call to Order

Chairperson Gunn called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

B. Statements by the General Public

There were no statements by the General Public.

C. Agenda Approval

The agenda was approved and adopted by unanimous voice vote.

D. Approval of the August 19, 2021 Regular Meeting Open Minutes

The meeting minutes to the August 19, 2021 Regular Meeting Minutes were approved and adopted by unanimous voice vote.

E. Welcome of New Members - Sufyan Sohel and Anjali Waikar

F. Director's Report

Director S. Baker reported that there were 35 open investigations. She stated that several cases had been dismissed or closed, which mostly included withdrawals due to settlements between the parties. Interim Chair J. Block inquired about what contributed to the significant increase in complaints. Director Baker responded that the increase in cases could be due to recent outreach and training efforts, individuals being able to file complaints as Covid-19 numbers decrease and Commission information that has been shared with the Cook County Sheriff's Office Probation Department. Deputy Director J. King stated that another reason for the increase in complaints could be due to removing the notary requirement, which has provided greater access in filing complaints.

Communications and Training Coordinator J. Epplin-Zapf discussed that she continues to meet with community groups and has requested meetings to collaborate to ensure

awareness of the Just Housing Amendment. She stated that she has met frequently with housing providing groups and housing advocacy organizations and has distributed a community outreach toolkit, which includes frequently asked questions and other materials that clarify the details of the Just Housing Amendment. J. Epplin-Zapf also discussed that she is working to provide additional outreach regarding Covid-19 vaccination rights for employees and employer obligations. She noted that there will be a few collaborative trainings to be held via Facebook live with the Cook County Department of Public Health and their Covid-19 outreach team. Finally, J. Epplin-Zapf noted that she has distributed a survey to inform the Just Housing Report and started receiving responses.

Director S. Baker commented that on the Board of Commissioners of Cook County meeting agenda, there was a resolution requesting a hearing regarding the needs of Afghan refugees to be re-settled in Cook County. She stated that the Board of Commissioners will task the Commission on Human Rights with providing a review and report following the hearing.

G. Meeting Minutes Transcript

Deputy Director J. King inquired whether the Commission preferred a transcript or a summary of the meeting minutes. After a brief discussion, the Commission decided to maintain the current minutes summary format.

H. Commission 180-day Extension for Investigation

- a. **2021JHA001 *NWSHC v. Mark Pasieka***
- b. **2021H006 *Jason Bodenchak v. Rosaria Atria***
- c. **2021H005 *Ebony Davis v. Tyris Bell***

By unanimous voice vote, the Board approved an extension for investigation in 2021JHA001, 2021H006 and 2021H005.

I. Commission Support – HB2775

Deputy Director J. King reported that Communication and Training Coordinator J. Epplin-Zapf was contacted by the Illinois Coalition of Fair Housing regarding the “Stop Source of Income Discrimination” House Bill 2775 in which they are seeking the Commission’s support. By unanimous voice vote, the Board has voted to support HB2775.

J. Just Housing Amendment Report Status

a. Rule Amendment – Request for Extension

Director Baker requested a rule amendment to extend the deadline for the Just Housing Report. By unanimous voice vote, the Board approved the request for extension.

K. Commission Membership Updates

a. Current Membership

Kenneth Gunn and Hedy Ratner resigned from the Commission on Human Rights.

b. Notice of Vote – Chair and Vice Chair pursuant to §42-34(a)(4)

The Board deferred the vote for Chair and Vice Chair to give everyone the opportunity to consider Chair role responsibilities. By unanimous voice vote, the Board approved Jack Block as Interim Chair of the Cook County Commission on Human Rights.

L. Adjourn

By unanimous voice vote, the meeting adjourned at 10:45am.