

Minutes of the Cook County
Commission on Human Rights – Open Session
February 11, 2021

=====

Attendance:

Present: Chairperson K. Gunn; Vice-Chairperson K. Ayala-Bermejo, Commissioners J. Block, C. Eatherton, G. Orr, A. Smock, C. E Harris II, H. Ratner

Absent: Commissioners E. Clarke-Bey, A. Hamada

Staff: Director S. Baker, Deputy Director G. Smith, Investigator A. Cahn, Investigator J. Jones, Administrative Analyst K. Johns.

I. Open Session

A. Call to Order

Chairperson Gunn called the meeting to order at 10:12 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 December 8, 2020 Regular Meeting Open Minutes

The meeting minutes to the December 8, 2020 Regular Meeting Minutes were approved and adopted by unanimous voice vote.

E. Approval of the 2021 Meeting Schedule

The 2021 meeting schedule was approved and adopted by unanimous voice vote.

F. Director's Report

Introduction of new director S. Baker. Director Baker reported there have been 42 intakes, 5 newly opened cases, 1 withdrawn case, 3 cases settled and 19 cases currently in investigation. She also reported that staff will be requesting mediation on some cases and there a currently a few cases at the hearing stage. Director Baker discussed her goals and initiatives. She stated that she was interested in ensuring that the department move things along very quickly and would be developing standard operating procedures. She reported that she initiated bi-weekly case management conferences in which senior staff reviews cases with investigators in effort to drive and push cases to conclusion. Director Baker noted that she plans on reviewing all forms to ensure they are up to date, that the information on all forms is correct with specific names and contact information so that the public has a clear contact. Director Baker reported that all staff has been trained on Microsoft Teams and are working at the highest function remotely. She mentioned that

she plans to have a new Legal Counsel by the end of February and an Outreach and Training Coordinator by May 2021. Director Baker along with staff, intends to develop new vision, mission and goals and invited board members to contribute their ideas. She also stated that she intends to perform an audit on all the authority and laws that the Department of Human Rights operates under to ensure investigations are conducted in the proper manner. Director Baker discussed her long-term goals to expand outreach and the department's relationship with community groups and stakeholders within the community and to have a conversation with groups and stakeholders about the status of human rights in Cook County. She mentioned the mandate within the human rights ordinance to develop reports and stated that she intends to begin developing these reports and conducting analysis with solutions and preventative initiatives.

G. Landlord Tenant Amendments to the Human Rights Ordinance

Deputy Director Smith reported that the amendments had been approved in committee, however, had not gone to the full board and she was uncertain when it would. She indicated that the commission is responsible for posting the amendments to its website. She reported that staff conducted a financial statement on how the new ordinance would affect the departments financial bottom line and although it would yield zero dollars for Human Rights, it would be a more significant bottom line for the Sheriff's office. Deputy Smith stated that she believed the board is working through the financial aspects of the ordinance and is awaiting to be approved by the full body.

H. Proposed Rules Amendment to Section 770.100 to extend evaluation and report to September 31, 2021 from March 31, 2021

Director Baker discussed that an analysis and report is due to the Cook County Board of Commissioners by March 31, 2021, however due to the pandemic and her recent role as director, she will seek an extension and amendment to the rule to extend the due date of the analysis and report to September 31, 2021. By unanimous voice vote, the Board approved recommendation to amend rules.

II. Executive Session

At 10:34 a.m., the Board adjourned into Executive Session

III. Open Session II

At 11:09 a.m., the Board convened back into Open Session

By unanimous voice vote, the Board approved 2017E002 and 2017E003 Recommended Order of Attorney's Fees and Costs.

By unanimous voice vote, the Board approved Requests for Extension of Investigation Periods.

By a unanimous voice vote, the meeting adjourned at 11:07 a.m.