
CITY OF KALAMAZOO
Civil Rights Board
Wednesday, October 4, 2023 – 5:00 p.m. • City Commission Chambers

MEMBERS PRESENT: Madison Lukeman, Cathy Phason, Sandra Calderon-Huezo, Pamela Burpee

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

Ex-Officio Members: Tanya Hewitt-Smith and Commissioner Hoffman

CITY STAFF PRESENT: Marcia Jones (Assistant City Attorney), Lal Tluangi (Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, Coordinator).

The Civil Rights Board meeting was called to order at 5:01 p.m. by Vice-Chair Lukeman

Agenda: Director Burpee motioned to adopt meeting agenda; supported by Director Calderon. Motion approved by unanimous vote. Agenda adopted.

Minutes: Director Phason motioned to approve minutes from August 2nd and September 6th, 2023, supported by Director Calderon. Motion approved by unanimous vote. Minutes adopted.

Public Announcements and Communications: DEI Specialist welcomed Pamela Burpee to Civil Rights Board.

New Business:

Chair Nominations and Voting – Director Calderon nominated Director Phason to be the next chair of the board. Director Phason accepted the nomination. Director Burpee seconded the motion. Motion approved unanimously.

New Board Member Nominations – Vice-Chair Lukeman mentioned to recommend Jena Lovelac to the city commission. Director Calderson and Chair Phason brought up an issue of Vice-Chair Lukeman being related to Jena and the nomination board consisting only of two board members. Director Calderson asked what the nominating committee is going to do to increase board membership and Chair Phason questioned the interview process. Commissioner Hoffman stated the importance of having a diverse voice in the board including that of landlords and explained the interview process including the interview questions. Vice-Chair Lukeman also shared that there is a small application pool. Assistant Attorney Jones also shared that the nomination committee brings applicants to the board, and it is the board that makes a recommendation to the city commission. Director Burpee seconded the motion. Director Calderon and Chair Phason opposed the motion. Jena Lovelace will not be recommended to the City Commission. Vice-Chair Lukeman motioned to recommend Sharda Sims to the City Commission, Director Burpee seconded the motion. Motion approved by unanimous vote.

Civil Rights Board Bylaw Amendment/Addition Discussion – Vice-Chair Lukeman stated that the amendment to the residency requirement in the board's bylaws has limited applicants and forced the nomination committee to reject good applicants. DEI Specialist Lal Tluangi informed the board that no applications for the board are dismissed, applications are year-round and as the board needs residents for the board, only resident applications are being considered for current vacancies. Assistant City Attorney Jones informed the board that the residency requirement is from the ordinance and thus cannot be changed without the City Commission. Chair Phason also stated that the suggested language to change the residency portion allowed for too many opportunities for non-residents to be in the board. Commissioner Hoffman stated that she believes the residency

portion should stay so that the board can be filled with residents of the city. The board agreed to table this topic as it connects to the ordinance.

Final Subcommittee Community Expert Appointment – Commissioner Hoffman asked Assistant Attorney Jones if community experts needed to go through City Commission, Assistant Attorney Jones confirmed that the chair can appoint with recommendation from the board. Director Calderon recommended that Lewis Smith and Patrese Griffin be apart of the subcommittee. Director Phason agreed with the recommendation. Both Vice-Chair Lukeman and Commissioner Hoffman stated the importance of having a landlord be apart of the committee as they played a role in the development of the ordinance.

Ordinance Review Subcommittee Meeting Slots – Chair Phason recommended that the discussion and choosing of meeting slots are put on hold until community experts have been informed of their appointment.

Public Comments:

Tobi Hanna-Davies (ISAAC) – Thanked the board for their persistence in enforcing the ordinance. Expressed sadness that people are being turned away for utilizing voucher and people regardless of classes should have the opportunity to showcase their ability to be a tenant.

Shona Espinoza – Stated that her CRB application didn't go through and yet the board has a landlord as its member as well as their relative. Reinstated that housing is a problem and that it was a problem to have a landlord on the board. Stated that members of the board come off as problematic. Shared her housing situation in which she is facing housing issues.

Charlae Davis (Executive Director of ISAAC) – Shared gratefulness for Patrese Griffin and other organizations that were involved in the creation of the ordinance. Stated that during the community outreach in 2018, the community shared their lived experiences and lifted their voice for change.

Unfortunately, phone line was not able to function, but residents were urged to email the DEI office for comments regarding the board meeting.

Miscellaneous Board Comments: Director Lukeman stated she appreciated the comment from Tobi regarding housing vouchers as landlords often say no to tenants with vouchers, expressed her disappointment that Jena Lovelace was not considered for the board as they have history working in the housing voucher sector. Commissioner Hoffman welcomed Director Burpee and congratulated Chair Phason. Stated that the board may not always agree but she believes the end result is taking care of the community. Chair Phason welcomed Director Burpee and thanked people for being involved and shared that the board is taking applications. Continued to thank ISAAC for their advocacy. Chair Phason addressed Shona and expressed sympathy for her issue and reiterated the importance of having a diverse voice in the board. Ended her comment by thanking the board.

Closing Comments: None

Next Meeting: November 1, 2023, at 5:00 pm

ADJOURNMENT: 6:17 pm

Lal Tluangi, Recording Secretary
Tanya Hewitt-Smith, Staff Liaison
Stephanie Hoffman, City Commission Liaison
Cathy Phason, Chair