
CITY OF KALAMAZOO
Civil Rights Board
Wednesday, February 7, 2024 – 5:00 p.m. • City Commission Chambers

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: Sharda Sims (Excused), Commissioner Hoffman (unexcused)

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 5:02 p.m. by Chair Phason.

Agenda: Vice-Chair Lukeman motioned to approve the agenda. Director Burpee seconded the motion. Motion approved by unanimous vote. Agenda adopted.

Minutes: Vice-Chair Lukeman motioned to approve minutes from December 6th, 2023, supported by Director Calderon. Motion approved by unanimous vote.

Public Announcements and Communications: None

New Business:

Meeting Frequency Discussion – The board discussed changing its meeting frequency from monthly to bimonthly. Vice-Chair Lukeman inquired as to the possibility of being able to switch from bimonthly back to monthly depending on the needs of the board.....Calderon...Director Burpee motioned to approve the board's meeting frequency to a bimonthly basis with an option to switch back to monthly as needed. Vice-chair Lukeman seconded the motion. Motion approved by unanimous vote.

Ordinance Review Subcommittee Update – Chair Phason shared that the subcommittee is working to have a full edited ordinance completed by March. Vice-Chair Lukeman stated that while the process is slow, the subcommittee is working with city staff and within themselves to get the ordinance reviewed.

Board Vacancy Update – Vice-Chair Lukeman shared that the nomination committee reviewed one application but decided to not pursue the applicant. Director Tanya stated that the board has not received any new applications since the one reviewed by the nomination committee. Board encouraged City of Kalamazoo residents to apply.

Public Comments:

Charlae (ISAAC) – Thanked the board for their continued work and showed gratitude to former Vice-Mayor Patrese for being the catalyst to have an ordinance. Shared brief history on the work that ISAAC and other organizations did in ensuring community outreach and that lived experiences of community members were shared in the beginnings of the ordinance.

Miscellaneous Board Comments: Director Burpee shared that since she has joined the board, the board has not accomplished much and wondered if there were other things the board would do outside of the ordinance. Stated that according to the complaint log, it seems like complaints are given out to other organizations to handle and how does the board ensure that the complaints are handled. She stated that the board has Civil Rights in the name but focuses on one thing and

continued to ask why the board doesn't discuss the complaints in the complaint log. Director Calderon stated that there are procedures in place with the complaint and that the board only looks at complaints if they are not referred to other organizations and if the complainant or respondent requests a hearing. Attorney Jones stated that there is a manual outlining the process and Director Burpee stated that she did not. Director Burpee brought up a community member that came to a civil rights board meeting regarding the community member not feeling welcomed by the Douglass Community Center because the individual had a service animal. She continued on to state that the complaint was heard by the board but there was nothing done. Chair Phason stated that the community member was encouraged to submit a complaint as that is a process and stated that the goal is to have the board more involved in the complaint process, that there should be follow-up to ensure the complaints are heard, and that board meeting agendas are formulated by board leadership and if board members would like to add to an agenda, they are welcome to. Vice-Chair Lukeman stated that the ordinance provides a basis for the complaint process and the board has never been able to be able to do an educational outreach with the community. Chair Phason shared that there is a basis to educate the community with the board but education is on hold as the ordinance is in the process of being edited. Chair Phason stated that the board's goal is to be inclusive and open to all people, and shared once again that if there is a topic that the board would like to discuss then it can be added to the agenda. Director Calderon shared that the rewrite of the ordinance will include an enforcement aspect as the ordinance does not reflect the wishes of the board. Chair Phason stated that she hopes Director Burpee stays as there are great individuals in the group and thanked Dr. Charlae for humanizing their work.

Closing Comments: None

Next Meeting: April 3rd, 2024 at 5:00 pm

ADJOURNMENT: 5:35 pm

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