
CITY OF KALAMAZOO
Civil Rights Board
Wednesday, April 30th, 2025 – 5:00 p.m. • City Commission Chambers

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

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 Specialist).

The Civil Rights Board meeting was called to order at 5:00 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 February 5th, 2025, supported by Director Burpee. Motion approved by unanimous vote. February 5th, 2025, minutes approved.

Public Announcements and Communications: Director Tanya ask that board members check their emails for communication as that is the primary communication method.

New Business:

Update on Ordinance Review Revision – Director Phason shared that the City Commission is not aligned with the subcommittee’s proposed edits, which position the Civil Rights Board as a quasi-judicial body and include adding "source of income" as a protected category—despite the city’s position that it is already covered under state law. Vice-Chair Lukeman suggested involving the board earlier in the complaint process or forming a subcommittee for that purpose. The board continued discussing the committee’s direction in light of the city’s feedback.

Education Subcommittee Next Steps Discussion – Vice-Chair Lukeman explained that the idea for an education committee emerged from the recent ordinance edits, which emphasized the need for public education. She expressed interest in leading the committee and is seeking additional volunteers. Attorney Jones clarified that committee appointments are made by the Chair. Chair Phason supported the initiative and noted that Director Burpee, who is also interested in education, could join the committee now that the board is full. Chair Phason also endorsed the committee’s efforts to engage the community and educate them on the ordinance and complaint process. Vice-Chair Lukeman asked to begin community engagement efforts, and Chair Phason confirmed that community members can assist as education committee experts.

Board Application Update – The board has recently received three applications. All applicants will be interviewed in the next two weeks. Chair Phason continued to encourage the community that lives in Kalamazoo to apply to the board as the seats need to be filled.

Nomination of Eursla Moore-Doyle – Vice-Chair Lukeman shared that Ms. Moore-Doyle was interviewed by two nomination committee members (Vice-Chair Lukeman and Commissioner Hoffman) and it is on their recommendation that the committee recommends Eursla Moore-Doyle be recommended to the City Commission for approval. Commissioner Hoffman stated that Ms. Moore-Doyle due to her clear roots in Kalamazoo, experience in the union and how the applicant is not afraid of have difficult conversations. Vice-Chair Lukeman motioned to have Eursla Moore-Doyle recommended to the City Commission for appointment. Director Calderon seconded the motion. Motion approved by unanimous vote.

Meeting Schedule – Chair Phason noted that board meetings have been held bimonthly due to delays in ordinance edits. Director Phason agreed that meeting every other month is sufficient until more developments occur. Vice-Chair Lukeman asked if other responsibilities, such as community engagement and education, might require more frequent meetings, which Chair Phason acknowledged. Vice-Chair Lukeman also mentioned an expected increase in applications and interviews, suggesting the nomination committee will present several candidates at the June 4th meeting. Director Calderson supported waiting until new members are appointed before deciding on meeting frequency.

Chair Phason also raised concerns about delays in the appointment process, citing that Lewis Smith's approval took 58 days instead of the usual 12. The board expressed concern over the mayor's sole authority in board appointments, the lack of an appeal process for denied applicants, and the need for clearer communication from the City Manager's Office regarding appointment decisions and denials.

Public Comments:

Lewis Smith – Thanked the community for their support. He clarified that he is the one that researched his application to make sure there was no conflict as a county attorney. Shared that one of the reasons he applied to the board was the understanding that it was advisory and with his experience of houselessness, he was motivated to apply. He shared that the mayor met with him on April 4th and told him that he would be denied an appointment and Lewis shared his application withdrawal with Chair Phason on April 7th. Continued on to say that there was real dialogue when it came to edits and that he would always support the board.

Drew Duncan – Thanked the board for what they do and the community for showing up. Asked to have the language in the ordinance that specifically states that the mayor can appoint as they feel there maybe some work arounds. He echoed the sentiment that it is problematic that communication is clear with the board, and it clearly doesn't align with Imagine Kalamazoo in which the masterplan highlighted the importance communication. Continued that Civil Rights will always be a contentious topic and was confused why the board just didn't agree to meet monthly after June when it has a full board. Recommended that the board released clear criteria/rubric when it came to board membership requirements.

Maggie Adams – Encourage the board to keep doing the work and confused on the charter/bylaws and asked if the bylaws were created for the board as in her experience, bylaws can be amended.

Dr. Charlae Davis – Echoed the overall gratitude of the board for continuing their work. Reiterated that the community supports them. Shared that she was disheartened by the fact that the board unanimously voted to have Lewis to the board just to be denied by the mayor. Thanked several community members that spearheaded the creation and development of the housing ordinance. Shared her support for community collaboration in ordinance education.

Ashante Collins – Shared that she supports the board and their work. That the ordinance was passed by the City Commission to protect all protected classes. That the ordinance without teeth and enforcement doesn't do anything for the community and shared the overall disappointment in the lack of appointment of Lewis to the board by the mayor.

Tobi Hanna-Davies – Thanked the board for their transparent and professional discussion. She was very happy with the board asking for and pushing for education. And seconded her support for the board meeting monthly and that the community members will support such movement. Shared that it would be great if other municipalities are looked at to see how they handle their processes.

Miscellaneous Board Comments: None

Closing Comments: Chair Phason thanked the board for their commitment and passion. Director Burpee thanked the community for their support and how encouraging it is and apologized to Mr. Lewis Smith for how his application was handled. Chair Phason and Director Burpee both shared the sentiment to continue the work to solidify the ordinance and the work they are doing. Director Burpee motioned to dismiss the board. Vice-Chair Lukeman seconded the motion. The motioned was approved unanimously. The board adjourned at 6:16 pm.

Next Meeting: June 4th, 2025, at 5:00 pm

ADJOURNMENT: 6:16 pm

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