
CITY OF KALAMAZOO
Civil Rights Board
Wednesday, February 4, 2026 – 5:00 p.m. • City Commission Chambers

MEMBERS PRESENT: Madison Lukeman, Sandra Calderon, Eursla Moore-Doyle, Joshua DeBoer, Willow Sipling, and Cathy Phason

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

Ex-Officio Members: Tanya Hewitt-Smith and Commissioner Hoffman (Absent)

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 Moore-Doyle seconded the motion. Motion approved by unanimous vote. Agenda adopted.

Minutes: Director DeBoer motioned to approve minutes from December 3rd, 2025, supported by Vice-Chair Lukeman. Motion approved by unanimous vote. December 3rd, 2025, minutes approved.

Public Announcements and Communications: None.

New Business:

Board Chair/Vice-Chair Nomination and Election – Vice-Chair Lukeman moved to approve Chair Phason to continue serving as Board Chair; Director Calderon seconded. The motion was approved unanimously, and Chair Phason continues as Board Chair. Vice-Chair Lukeman indicated her willingness to continue serving as Vice-Chair and expressed support for other nominations. Director DeBoer moved to nominate Director Sipling as Vice-Chair; Vice-Chair Lukeman seconded. The motion was approved unanimously, and Director Sipling was elected Vice-Chair. Chair Phason acknowledged the active participation of Director DeBoer and Vice-Chair Sipling in board subcommittees.

Updates on Education Subcommittee – Director Lukeman reported that since the December 3 Board meeting, the subcommittee has met three times. Vice-Chair Sipling was established as co-leader of the subcommittee. The subcommittee continues to seek co-leadership from a community expert and is requesting assistance in identifying impacted community members to participate. Director Lukeman noted that the subcommittee meeting time remains flexible, though no requests for changes have been raised. Chair Phason shared that Vice-Chair Sipling has scheduled a meeting with an impacted community member and that other interested participants are welcome to join. Vice-Chair Sipling provided an update on the development of tri-fold brochures for tenants and landlords, emphasizing accessibility, ease of use, a process map, and clarification of ordinance requirements. Director DeBoer commended the brochure's development and noted its value in building momentum. Director Calderon raised concerns regarding references to the 91-day complaint and investigation timelines in the renter brochure and recommended clarifying the process to avoid confusion. Chair Phason acknowledged the subcommittee's progress and invited additional feedback to be shared directly with subcommittee members.

Director Lukeman stated that the subcommittee will meet the following Monday to revise the 91-day language and asked whether the board would like updates. Chair Phason confirmed that updates are welcome, including via email. Director Lukeman clarified that formal board approval is not required for these updates.

Updates on Ordinance Review Subcommittee – Vice-Chair Sipling reported that, in coordination with the process map, both the online and physical complaint forms have been updated to clarify

key ordinance requirements, including city jurisdiction and the 91-day filing window. Concerns were noted that the 91-day timeline may feel lengthy for complainants and could limit engagement if alternative organizations are not clearly identified. Director DeBoer noted that while timelines are not currently presenting an issue, the length of the process could become a concern. Chair Phason shared that community feedback emphasized the importance of early board awareness of complaints and encouraged continued complaint submissions to establish a documented record. Director Hewitt-Smith stated that, in response to community feedback, the office is open to streamlining the complaint process and confirmed that DEI staff will provide a complaint log at each board meeting and include it on the meeting agenda. Director Lukeman noted that board members have ongoing access to the complaint log via SharePoint and advised members to contact DEI Specialist Tluangi if access issues arise. Chair Phason shared that if there is any agenda item, board members can add to the agenda.

Commitment to Committees and Subcommittee Appointment – Chair Phason emphasized that board and subcommittee roles are voluntary and require active participation and clear communication regarding availability. She noted that members with limited capacity are encouraged to step down to allow others to serve. Chair Phason reported that, following the resignation of Director Calderon, there is a vacancy on the Education Subcommittee and an open board seat. She stated that she will temporarily cover the Education Subcommittee until the vacancy is filled.

Public Comments:

Tristian (We the People Action Fund Organizer) – spoke in support of renters’ rights initiatives, including the right to organize, just-cause eviction, and right-to-renew policies, emphasizing the role of tenant unions in advancing housing protections.

Caleb (Community Member) – raised concerns regarding a potential conflict of interest related to Director Lukeman’s role as a landlord and stated that some community members are reluctant to submit civil rights complaints due to perceived intimidation. He indicated that follow-up would occur.

Maggie Adams (City Resident) – recommended adjusting subcommittee meeting times to improve accessibility for individuals with daytime work schedules. She also expressed concern that public-facing brochures have not yet incorporated feedback from impacted community members or landlords prior to finalization.

Linea (City Resident) – expressed support for We the People Action Fund and encouraged board members to support local housing initiatives where possible.

Charlae Davis – thanked the board for its work, congratulated Chair Phason and Vice-Chair Sipling, and emphasized the importance of including impacted community members in Education Subcommittee co-leadership. She also supported exploring alternative meeting times and incorporating community input into brochure development.

Miscellaneous Board Comments: Director Moore-Doyle requested an update regarding the Shona Espinoza matter. Chair Phason stated that Vice-Chair Sipling will meet with Ms. Espinoza individually the following week. Director Lukeman thanked Beth Romeo and the Fair Housing team for their input on the brochure development and clarified that subcommittee co-leadership consists of one board member, one representative from a housing agency, and one impacted community member. Vice-Chair Sipling thanked community members for their public comments, emphasized the importance of including impacted community members in subcommittee leadership, and acknowledged the need for creative approaches to ensure their participation. She also thanked the board for the trust placed in her as Vice-Chair. Director Moore-Doyle expressed interest in joining the Education Subcommittee pending a change in meeting time. Chair Phason appointed Director Moore-Doyle to the subcommittee and stated that she will temporarily fill the role until meeting times are adjusted. Chair Phason announced that there is an open seat on the board, acknowledged the presence of City Manager Hankins, and thanked city staff and community members for their continued support. In response to public comment, Chair Phason clarified that complaints are not directed to Director Lukeman and that board members are required to recuse themselves from

matters in which they are involved. She encouraged community members not to feel intimidated by the presence of any board member.

Closing Comments: None

Next Meeting: April 1st, 2026, at 5:00 pm

ADJOURNMENT: 5:54 pm

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