CITY OF KALAMAZOO
Civil Rights Board
Wednesday, June 3, 2026 – 5:00 p.m. • City Commission Chambers

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

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

CITY STAFF PRESENT: Lal Tluangi (Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Specialist).

The Civil Rights Board meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Chair Phason.

Agenda: Director Dickason motioned to approve the agenda. Director DeBoer seconded the motion. Motion approved by unanimous vote. Agenda adopted.

Minutes: Director DeBoer motioned to approve minutes from April 1st, 2026, supported by Director Lukeman. Motion approved by unanimous vote. April 1st, 2026, minutes approved.

Public Announcements and Communications: Chair Phason and Director Hewitt-Smith welcomed director Dickason to the board.

New Business:

Update from the Education Subcommittee – Vice-Chair Sipling thanked the community partners participating in the subcommittee. The subcommittee is exploring opportunities to engage experts in education and employment to support its work. Community feedback has been received on the brochure, and the revised draft will be presented to the Board for review with the goal of printing it soon.

Update from the Ordinance Review Subcommittee – Director DeBoer reported that the subcommittee is seeking clarification regarding the scope of the ordinance and how partnerships with local agencies would function. The subcommittee contacted the Fair Housing Center, which provided general data regarding housing discrimination complaints. Due to confidentiality limitations, only broad information was shared, including complaint totals by ZIP code. The Fair Housing Center reported receiving 63 housing discrimination complaints between January 1 and April 30. The subcommittee is also identifying other organizations that may be able to provide similar data and remains in the information-gathering stage. Chair Phason noted that Director DeBoer and Vice-Chair Sipling have been meeting with external partners and reiterated the Board's longstanding interest in strengthening partnerships. She stated that the data received from the Fair Housing Center demonstrates that complaints exist but are not being routed through the City. Vice-Chair Sipling added that the subcommittee is reviewing the ordinance to ensure it adequately addresses community needs. Research has been conducted to develop potential amendments, though additional investigation is needed before formal recommendations can be made. Director Lukeman asked whether the subcommittee had considered changing the Board's name. Vice-Chair Sipling confirmed that the topic has been discussed and noted that some municipalities use names such as "Human Rights Board." Chair Phason expressed support for exploring similar options.

Commissioner Hoffman expressed concern about the pace of progress, stating that changes and policies should be implemented more quickly so the community can see meaningful results.

She also noted that residents appear more comfortable seeking assistance from the Fair Housing Center than from the City despite the existence of the ordinance and asked how the Board could better align its actions with its stated goals. Chair Phason agreed that progress has been slow and stated that the current ordinance lacks clarity regarding implementation. She reminded Commissioner Hoffman that she serves on the Ordinance Review Subcommittee and invited her to attend future meetings to receive updates and contribute to ongoing discussions. Chair Phason also noted the Board's interest in obtaining complaint data from additional agencies. Commissioner Hoffman clarified that her concerns were directed toward City administration rather than the Board itself. She encouraged both the Board and community members to remain persistent, noting that other municipalities have implemented similar reforms successfully. Chair Phason echoed that sentiment. Director Hewitt-Smith emphasized the importance of shared accountability. While City staff strive to respond promptly to requests, challenges have arisen in bringing all necessary stakeholders together. She stated that DEI staff remain committed to supporting the Board's efforts but noted that responsibility for progress rests with multiple parties, not solely the City.

Director Lukeman recalled that the subcommittee initially proposed significant changes that were not approved by the City. She suggested that focusing on smaller, achievable improvements—such as revisions to the complaint form—may be a more effective strategy moving forward. Chair Phason stated that the Board currently does not have enforcement authority under the ordinance and that there remains uncertainty regarding the full extent of its responsibilities. Vice-Chair Sipling stressed that meetings should lead to measurable outcomes and highlighted the importance of transparency and standardized processes. Vice-Chair Sipling noted that several inquiries to City and County staff remain unanswered and that procedural improvements could help facilitate progress.

Announcement of Board Position – Chair Phason announced that an upcoming vacancy is open to both residents and non-residents and noted that no application had yet been forwarded from DEI staff to the Nominating Committee. Director Calderon reported that three applications have been received and expressed appreciation for the clarification regarding residency requirements. Chair Phason encouraged additional interested individuals to apply and asked whether applications would continue to be accepted after interviews begin. Director Calderon stated that interviews have not yet been scheduled due to ongoing efforts to coordinate dates. Applications will continue to be accepted until an offer is made to a candidate. Director Hewitt-Smith noted that applications are accepted year-round and emphasized the importance of scheduling interviews promptly due to the time-sensitive nature of Board appointments. Chair Phason added that City Commission agendas can fill quickly, making timely interviews essential. Director Lukeman stated that she intends to remain on the Board until the vacancy is filled.

Shared Email Box – Chair Phason explained that community members have requested a direct method of contacting the Board rather than communicating exclusively through DEI staff. Following discussion, Board leadership will initially be granted access to a shared email account, with additional members potentially added later. Director Hewitt-Smith reported that key stakeholders, including Information Technology and the City Clerk's Office, are working on implementation and resolving remaining logistical issues.

Board Meeting Location Change – Chair Phason announced that all boards are being relocated to the Crosstown Parkway facility and that Board approval is required for the move. Vice-Chair Sipling highlighted the importance of ADA compliance, accessibility, and adequate audiovisual capabilities. He noted that he had been awaiting confirmation from City staff regarding these accommodations. Director Hewitt-Smith apologized for the communication delay and confirmed that the facility is ADA compliant, equipped with the necessary technology to host City Commission meetings, and provides accessible parking. She also confirmed that public call-in participation will be available. Chair Phason noted that the public call-in number is

not currently posted. DEI Specialist Tluangi reported that she contacted the City Communications Specialist, who confirmed outreach to Public Media Network. In the event the number was not distributed in time, she provided the call-in number (888-362-9556) and stated it would be announced during the public comment period.
DEI Specialist Tluangi reminded the Board that a vote was needed to approve the location change. Director DeBoer moved to relocate all future Board meetings to the Crosstown Parkway facility. Director Dickason seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Civil Rights Complaint Updates – DEI Specialist Tluangi highlighted recent revisions to the complaint form recommended by the Ordinance Review Subcommittee. The updated form clarifies that the ordinance applies only within City limits and directs individuals with complaints outside the ordinance's jurisdiction to appropriate external organizations. A recent complaint involved employment discrimination. The complainant was referred to the Michigan Department of Civil Rights and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Chair Phason asked how attorneys are assigned to review complaints. DEI Specialist Tluangi explained that attorneys are assigned through the City Attorney's Office. Attorney Marcia confirmed that once an attorney completes their review and determination, the outcome is communicated to DEI staff.

Public Comments:

Kaleb Beiter – stated that he has not heard anyone use the public call-in number and suggested that it be added to the Civil Rights Board webpage if it is not already listed before the next meeting.

Ashante Collins – expressed concern that discussions are not consistently leading to action. Collins stated that residents appear more comfortable seeking assistance from outside organizations than from the Board, reflecting concerns about trust and fear of retaliation. Collins also noted that bureaucratic barriers can hinder the protection of residents' rights.

Charlae Davis – referenced the detailed complaint update provided in April and asked what criteria and practices are used to determine the information shared with Board members regarding complaints. Davis also recommended involving Board members in discussions between City staff and complainants to provide additional perspectives.

Miscellaneous Board Comments: Director DeBoer read the State of Michigan proclamation recognizing June as Pride Month and provided historical context regarding federal and state protections for the LGBTQIA+ community. He also highlighted local Pride events scheduled for June 5–6 in Kalamazoo. Director Lukeman addressed previous comments regarding her service on the Board. She acknowledged that housing issues can be highly personal and emphasized the importance of diverse perspectives in achieving positive community outcomes. She also discussed her company's partnerships with Integrated Services of Kalamazoo and participation in housing voucher and housing assistance programs. Vice-Chair Sipling reiterated the public call-in number and noted that it had not been made publicly available as previously requested. He encouraged community members to contact the streaming service with concerns. He also reported that requests to update information on the City website had been directed to the City Clerk's Office and that a response is still pending. Vice-Chair Sipling again emphasized the Board's interest in recruiting employment experts for the Education Subcommittee and reiterated the importance of the ordinance in protecting residents from discrimination. Chair Phason welcomed Director Dickason to the Board, thanked community members for raising concerns, and assured attendees that their feedback is being heard. She expressed appreciation for the Board's continued dedication and encouraged the community to remain engaged and hold the Board accountable.

Closing Comments: None

Next Meeting: August 5th, at 5:00 pm

ADJOURNMENT: 6:05 pm

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