Agenda
Civil Rights Board

City of Kalamazoo

Wednesday, September 2, 2026 5:00 PM

City Hall, Community Room – 241 West South Street

A. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

B. ADOPTION OF FORMAL AGENDA

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approval of the minutes from the Civil Rights Board meeting on August 5, 2026

D. COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

E. HEARINGS

F. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

1. Presentation of Applicant Recommendation

2. Board Discussion and Vote

G. PUBLIC COMMENTS

H. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

I. ADJOURNMENT

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

MEMBERS PRESENT: Sandra Calderon, Joshua DeBoer, Willow Sipling, Keshia Dickason, and Cathy Phason

MEMBERS ABSENT: Eursla Moore-Doyle

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 DeBoer motioned to approve the amended agenda with the addition of section C. Vice-Chair Sipling seconded the motion. Motion approved by unanimous vote. Agenda adopted.

Minutes: Director Calderon motioned to approve minutes from June 3rd, 2026, supported by Director DeBoer. Motion approved by unanimous vote. June 3rd, 2026, minutes approved.

Public Announcements and Communications: None.

New Business:

Update from the Education Subcommittee – Vice-Chair Sipling reported that the subcommittee gathered community feedback on the Chapter 18 and 18A brochures and completed several rounds of edits. Two tri-fold brochures were developed—one for tenants and one for property owners/landlords. The next steps are to print and distribute the brochures to the community, including property owners and Fair Housing organizations, and identify additional locations for distribution.

Update from the Ordinance Review Subcommittee – Chair Phason shared that the Board received proposed edits to the ordinance, which Vice-Chair Sipling will present. Vice-Chair Sipling stated that the proposed changes would be voted on today and, if approved, forwarded to the City Commission for consideration later in the agenda.

Expectations for Board Members – Chair Phason shared that Board leadership discussed expectations for Board members, including timely communication, responding to emails, notifying leadership of meeting absences, and communicating when unable to fulfill commitments such as subcommittee assignments.

Nomination Committee (Results of Interviews, Nominations, Discussion for Board Position) – Chair Phason stated that there were three applicants and three interviews. While the Nomination Committee typically provides one recommendation, all three applicants were considered strong candidates, and the full Board received their resumes and applications.
Director Calderon noted that the interview process was difficult due to scheduling conflicts and inconsistencies. She attended two of the three interviews, while Commissioner Hoffman attended one. Chair Phason clarified that the Nomination Committee is responsible for applicant interviews and consists of Commissioner Hoffman and Directors Calderon and Moore-Doyle. It was noted that one interview began before a Civil Rights Board member joined.

The Board also discussed notice provided to applicants regarding attendance at the Board meeting. Director Hewitt-Smith stated that staff were notified only approximately one hour before the meeting, while Director Calderon noted that applicants received less than 24 hours' notice.

Directors expressed concern that adequate notice and clear expectations had not been provided. Director DeBoer recommended that applicants not be asked to speak at the meeting given the lack of adequate notice, which was supported by Director Calderon. The Board discussed concerns about changes to the nomination process, including the lack of consistent procedures and clarity regarding applicant expectations. Chair Phason stated that the bylaws do not establish a specific nomination process. Commissioner Hoffman recommended that future applicants be interviewed by the full Board, and Vice-Chair Sipling suggested revisiting and potentially codifying the nomination process.

The Board discussed the applicants and potential next steps. Director DeBoer recommended Applicant Chambers, supported by Director Dickason. Chair Phason stated she was undecided between Applicants Johnson and Burrell. Vice-Chair Sipling suggested inviting applicants to attend subcommittee meetings to allow Board members to observe their community involvement. Director Hewitt-Smith expressed concern that adding additional steps could further change the process and emphasized the importance of accountability, transparency, and respecting the Nomination Committee's role. Chair Phason noted that the Nomination Committee did not provide one recommendation for this round, and Director Calderon provided an individual recommendation for Applicant Burrell. Director Calderon recommended tabling the matter due to the lack of clarity and changes to the process and noted that she had not received requested interview notes from Director Moore-Doyle.

Director DeBoer motioned to table the vote on a new Board member until a future meeting, seconded by Director Dickason. Vice-Chair Sipling recommended amending the motion to specify that nomination and voting would not occur until the Nomination Committee reconvenes to deliberate and provide a final recommendation, with the possibility of a special meeting. The amendment was accepted, and the motion to table passed.

Update to Civil Rights Board Email Contact – Vice-Chair Sipling discussed the community's request for a direct way to contact the Board, including a shared email address or contact form, and requested an update from DEI Specialist Tluangi. Staff reported that the request will require internal discussions with multiple City departments to establish a standardized communications policy. Staff noted that Vice-Chair Sipling's recommendation will be considered as part of that discussion. Director DeBoer noted concerns that a direct contact method could create confusion about whether residents are communicating with the Board or the City and recommended continuing the previous process of directing community members to dei@kalamazoocity.org, which staff would then forward to Board members. DEI Specialist Tluangi confirmed that this remains the best interim option. Vice-Chair Sipling requested that the email address be added to the Board's webpage, which staff will forward to the Communications team.

Proposed Change for Chapter 18 Ordinance – Vice-Chair Sipling stated that the Board received proposed ordinance edits developed in response to community concerns regarding enforcement and informed by other municipalities. The edits would clarify and formalize the complaint process, including local review before referral. Director DeBoer noted that many changes reflect current practices but would provide clearer documentation.
The Board discussed the need for City Attorney review before forwarding the edits to the City Commission. Attorney Jones stated she could complete the review by the October Board meeting. Director Dickason motioned to have Attorney Jones review the edits and have them forwarded to the City Commission through Commissioner Hoffman, seconded by Director Calderon. The motion passed unanimously.

Updates Regarding Location Change (Repair Timeline, Return to City Hall Timeline) –Director Hewitt-Smith noted that while staff previously stated the Board could meet in the new administrative building, the bylaws specify that meetings must be held at City Hall. The proposed amendment would allow the Board to meet at a designated or emergency location. Director DeBoer motioned to approve the updated bylaw language, seconded by Director Dickason. Motion passed unanimously.

Civil Rights Complaint Updates – DEI Specialist Tluangi shared that there is no update to the Civil Rights Board as there has been no new complaint received since the last meeting.

Public Comments:

Tobi Hanna-Davis – She questioned why the Board had not scheduled a special meeting and invited Board members to attend ISAAC's annual meeting on August 11 from 6:30–8:30 p.m. via Zoom.

Charlae Davis – She thanked the Board for its ongoing work and willingness to engage in dialogue and expressed appreciation for the strong pool of applicants. She emphasized the need for a clear nomination process, including ensuring that Board or Nomination Committee members are present for applicant interviews.

Miscellaneous Board Comments: Commissioner Hoffman noted that the proposed ordinance changes will be reviewed by City Attorney staff and the City Commission, with public review and continued community involvement throughout the process. Vice-Chair Sipling thanked the community for coming together and holding KDPS accountable, noting that a unified and organized community voice can lead to change. Director Dickason asked to join the Nomination Committee. Chair Phason stated that the committee is currently full. Vice-Chair Sipling noted that the Education Subcommittee had an opening following Director Lukeman's departure, and Chair Phason appointed Director Dickason to the Education Subcommittee. Director Calderon asked whether the bylaw provision regarding absences applies to subcommittee meetings. Chair Phason clarified that it applies to Board meetings and stated that subcommittee attendance expectations could be discussed separately. Chair Phason thanked Board members, applicants, and the community for their time, patience, and participation, including the Spring Valley event. She noted that no special meeting date was set because the Nomination Committee must first meet and provide its recommendation, which may occur sooner rather than later.

Closing Comments: None

Next Meeting: October 7th, at 5:00 pm

ADJOURNMENT: 7:05 pm

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