

PITTSBURGH COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS

Minutes of Meeting

January 9, 2006

Attendance: B. J. Samson, *Chair*

Rev. Tim Smith
Adelaide Smith

Leah Williams Duncan
Lynette Drawn-Williamson

Dr. Susan Hunt

Called/Unable to attend:

Elizabeth Pittinger
Curtis Smith

Stephan Broadus
Robert McClenahan

Kevin Trower, Solicitor

Absent:

Christine Williams

David Engel

Staff:

Charles F. Morrison, *Director*
Connie Miskis Zatek Yancy Miles

Guests:

Dave Goldberg, *Controller's Office*

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair, B. J. Samson, called the meeting to order at 3:45 p.m.

II. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

A minor typo correction was indicated on the notes for the December Public Hearing Section; otherwise, the Minutes of the December 2005 Commission meeting were unanimously adopted as circulated. The motion was set forth by Commissioner Adelaide Smith, seconded by Dr. Hunt and carried unanimously. *(The typo will be corrected prior to further circulation of the Minutes.)*

III. STAFF & COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Compliance Update

Compliance Supervisor, Yancy Miles reported that a formal contract has not yet been received from the EEOC, but an additional six dual-filed cases were submitted in December 2005. To date, the total number of cases is 17 for the contract period which began on October 1, 2005.

Commission Chair, B. J. Samson, instructed Director Morrison to draft a letter for her signature to EEOC representatives informing them of the Commission's concern that a contract is not yet in place for FY 2006.

B. Director's Report

Director Morrison highlighted information from the written report which was mailed to all Commissioners prior to today's meeting.

1. In mid-December Director Morrison released information to the press regarding the settlements in three different housing cases. Two were based on familial status and one on race. As a result of the release, the *Pittsburgh Post Gazette* called for more information and printed an article which appeared on the first page of the Local Section, December 23, 2005. (A copy of the article was distributed to Commissioners in attendance.) Commissioner Samson was encouraged "to see that the Commission has a presence in the community" and noted that she had also heard about the settlements in a radio announcement around that same time.

Commissioner Samson suggested that the Director consider having staff and/or Commissioners attend housing tenant councils or community meetings to distribute literature about the Commission, answer questions, etc.,

2. Local fair housing enforcement agencies are working on an educational program for Fair Housing Month (April). A tentative positive reply has been received from Kim Kendrick, HUD's newly-appointed Assistant Secretary of the office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO). Ms Kendrick is a native of Pittsburgh and has agreed to be a featured speaker for this program. The details are not yet finalized but it is anticipated that the program will be directed to both consumers and providers. The tentative date is the week of April 10, 2006.
3. The fourth quarter meeting of fair housing agencies included representatives of the local HUD office. Director Morrison indicated that HUD has been very supportive of the Commission's work and called to express encouragement when they saw the recent article in the *Post Gazette*.
4. Director Morrison reported that he had recently met with executives of the Fair Housing Partnership of Greater Pittsburgh with regard to the lack of cases that are being referred to the Commission. He explained that the role of the FHP is to advocate for victims of housing discrimination and refer cases which fall within the jurisdiction of the Commission. He stated that the Commission has only received two such cases in the last year, although the FHP claims there have been many more which have not reached this office.

Director Morrison also reported that he had addressed similar concerns with HUD and the Housing Authority. He learned that the Housing Authority was sending referrals to HUD, as required, but those same referrals were NOT making their way back to this Commission. As a result, Director Morrison asked the Housing Authority to maintain a log and send a copy of the complaint directly to the Commission at the same time that it sends it to HUD so that unnecessary delays in processing might be avoided.

The Director also reported a further concern with the Fair Housing Partnership involving an article which appeared in the Fall/Winter 2005 issue of the FHP's newsletter naming this Commission as working in concert with the FHP on a particular complaint. In fact, the Commission has no knowledge of this complaint. Director Morrison stated that after reading the article he placed several calls to the director of the FHP to request a copy of the complaint, and finally received a copy just before today's meeting. He planned to address this concern and resolve the issue as soon as possible.

Director Morrison explained that the FHP had a contract with the City of Pittsburgh (through the Department of Planning) to do testing in the local housing market. As a result, one in four cases was found to have employed possible discriminatory practices. Director Morrison asked the FHP what it did once testing was completed, besides that which is done for the City. The response was the findings are submitted to HUD and there is no further action because there is a "long-standing unwritten policy to take no action."

Commissioner Samson asked Director Morrison to draft a formal letter of complaint to the FHP in taking this stance. She said that she hoped that such a pro-active approach would bring about a positive change in FHP's position.

Director Morrison stated that Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission receives approximately 300 housing cases throughout the state, with about 100 cases from the 23 counties in Western Pennsylvania. According to recent statistics, HUD receives approximately 10,000 cases nationwide. This Commission received approximately 20 housing cases during 2005.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. Commission Vacancies

Upon return from sabbatical, Father Vallone was re-assigned to McKees Rocks, and therefore, can no longer serve as a Commissioner. His resignation makes three vacancies currently on the board. The Chairperson encouraged all

Commissioners to forward names of potential candidates for appointment to these vacancies before the February Commission meeting.

It was also noted that the terms of four additional Commissioners will expire on April 1, 2006, and there is potential for half of the Commission to be replaced at that time.

Commissioner Samson instructed Director Morrison to request a meeting with Mayor O'Connor to discuss the vacancies as well as other issues of interest.

2. Commissioner Attendance

Commissioner Samson again raised concern about the lack of attendance by some Commissioners. She stated that while everyone is busy or has other commitments, not calling to report an absence is rude. She also indicated that one Commissioner has not attended one meeting during all of 2005. While she has spoken with him, it has not resulted in any change.

Commissioner Adelaide Smith suggested forming a committee to review the Commission By-Laws and make a recommendation to change the attendance requirements to insure regular attendance. Commissioners were in agreement. Commissioners Adelaide Smith and Leah Williams-Duncan will serve on this committee and report back to the full Commission as soon as possible.

With no other business to address, a motion to adjourn was set forth by the Reverend Tim Smith and seconded by Commissioner Drawn-Williamson. The motion carried unanimously and the meeting concluded at 4:45 p.m.

/cmz

3 landlords fined by city commission for housing bias

By Diana Nelson Jones
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

12-23-05
The Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations has penalized landlords in Carrick, Mount Washington and Squirrel Hill in settling three complaints of housing discrimination.

One was a case the commission initiated as a result of citywide audits by the Fair Housing Partnership of Greater Pittsburgh of rental and sales policies.

Charles Morrison, director of the commission, said of 40 audits — 30 of rental policies, 10 of sales policies — the commission has initiated nine complaints. The first to be settled was against Sandra Fundy in Mount Washington for having a "no kids" policy. She was charged \$1,000 in penalties.

"There will be more complaints by the commission," said Mr. Morrison. "If it looks like something is actionable [from an audit], we will initiate a complaint and run an investigation."

Another case settled yesterday involved a tenant turning in her landlord for statements made against renting to a black tenant in Carrick.

Pamela Baumiller wanted out of her lease and a black person had inquired about taking it over. Ms.

SEE **BIAS**, PAGE B-5

Landlords fined for housing bias

BIAS, FROM PAGE B-1

Baumiller claimed that her landlord, Linda Chalovich, expressed an aversion to that. In the settlement, the landlord agreed to let Ms. Baumiller out of her lease and to pay the commission \$200 in penalties.

Another case, in Squirrel Hill, was resolved in favor of Joshua Bernstein, who filed a complaint that Marguerite Sapor refused to show him an apartment in Squirrel Hill because he had children.


She agreed to pay Mr. Bernstein \$2,500 in damages and \$4,000 in civil penalties, \$1,000 to the Fair Housing Partnership and \$3,000 to the Commission on Human Relations.

Diana Nelson Jones can be reached at djones@post-gazette.com or 412-263-1626.

Connie Z

MEMORANDUM

To: All Commissioners

FROM: Connie Miskis Zatek 
Secretary to Director

DATE: January 3, 2006

SUBJECT: **MEETING NOTICE**

The Commission is scheduled to meet on **Monday, January 9, 2006** as follows:

2:30 p.m. Compliance Review Section

3:30 p.m. Full Commission meeting

The following items are enclosed for your review:

1. Minutes of the December 5, 2005 Commission Meeting
2. Case Summary Package *(for Compliance Review Section Members Only)*
3. Director's Report

If you are unable to attend your assigned meeting, please call me at 412-255-2600 to report your absence.

/cmz
Enclosures

Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations
Director's Report
December 30, 2005

- Dec. 06, 2005 Director Morrison attended a meeting with the executive staff of the Fair Housing Partnership of Greater Pittsburgh to discuss charge receipts, past and projected testing programs, as well as our proposal to the Maurice Falk Medical Fund for a study on housing discrimination based on source of income and other programmatic concerns.
- Dec. 08, 2005 Director Morrison attended a program entitled "Brown's legacy and the lessons for healthy children" presented by Margaret Beale Spencer at the University of Pittsburgh, School Of Social Work Center on Race and Social Problems
- Dec. 13, 2005 Director Morrison provided a program on the work of the Commission for the management staff of the Allegheny County Recorder of Deeds. Topics included coverage of the laws prohibiting housing discrimination and discrimination in employment with a focus on the rights and responsibilities of both management and employees.
- Dec. 14, 2005 Director Morrison attended the YWCA of Greater Pittsburgh's 2006 Tribute to Women Leadership Awards committee meeting.
- Dec. 14, 2005 Director Morrison convened the quarterly meeting of the area's agencies and organizations involved in fair housing education, outreach and enforcement. Topics discussed included source of income discrimination, the upcoming analysis of impediments to fair housing choice study, disability discrimination in multi-family dwellings, testing, the low number of complaints being filed and plans for Fair Housing Month in April 2006.
- Dec. 15, 2005 Director Morrison attended Allegheny County's public hearing on the Consolidated Plan which will be submitted to HUD under the CDBG program. Many advocates for fair housing testified. People also complained about the lack of citizen input into the Plan prior to its development and the lack of affordable, accessible housing in the county.