

PITTSBURGH COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS

A G E N D A

March 2, 2009

- I. CALL TO ORDER**
- II. ADOPTION OF MINUTES**
- III. STAFF AND COMMITTEE REPORTS**
 - A. Compliance Update
 - B. Director's Report
 - C. Housing Committee Report
- IV. DISCUSSION: FAIR HOUSING MONTH ACTIVITIES**
 - A. Location of April CHR Meeting
 - B. Other Outreach Proposals
- V. OLD BUSINESS**
 - (from January 5 CHR meeting)*
 - Update on proposed LGBT Advisory Committee
 - Proposed meeting with Mayor
- VI. ANNOUNCEMENTS & OPEN FLOOR**
- VII. ADJOURNMENT**

Please be considerate of others; turn off cell phones.

PITTSBURGH COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS

Minutes of Meeting

March 2, 2009

Attendance: Adelaide Smith, *Chair*

Leah Williams-Duncan	Sister Eleanor P. Loftus
Mary K. McDonald	Amanda Rubio
Winford Craig	Elbert R. Gray, Jr.
Dr. Lee Fogarty	Curtis A. Smith

Called/Unable to Attend:

Rev. Timothy L. Smith, Sr.	Elizabeth Pittinger
Lynette Drawn-Williamson	Anne McCafferty

Absent: Neil Parham

Staff: Charles Morrison, <i>Director</i>	
W. Kevin Trower, <i>Solicitor</i>	Sheron D. Clark
Connie Miskis Zatek	Jillane McKinley

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Adelaide Smith called the meeting to order at 3:35 p.m.

II. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the February 2, 2009, Commission meeting were unanimously adopted as mailed, upon motion of Commissioner McDonald and second by Sister Eleanor Loftus.

III. STAFF AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Compliance Update

Director Morrison reported that as of February, 50 cases have been submitted to the EEOC for contract credit. He noted that contracts have not yet been received for FY 2009 from EEOC or HUD. He is assuming that the contract levels will remain unchanged from 2008. If so, approximately 22 employment cases must then be completed by September 30, 2009. Director Morrison stated he does not anticipate a problem in meeting that goal.

Before continuing with regular business, the Chairperson indicated that the professional staff meets monthly with the Compliance Review Section, but they do not often have the opportunity to interact with members of the Public Hearing Section. Therefore, she asked the two Commission Representatives present to introduce themselves and to briefly outline their role with the Commission. She Sheron D. Clark and Jillane McKinley are both employed full time as case investigators. Ms Clark has been with the Commission for approximately 16 years; Ms McKinley, a long-term City employee, has been with the Commission for only five years. Both expressed their appreciation to Commissioners for their support in trying to meet the challenges of investigating and resolving the various cases that come before the Commission.

Director Morrison reiterated that appreciation, noting that the nature of the work of the Compliance Review Section demands more Commissioner involvement, meaning more time away from regular jobs, and possibly the scheduling of personal time to meet with parties to a case, staff and the Solicitor. As a result, a majority of cases are resolved before they reach the public hearing level. The Director alerted the Public Hearing Commissioners to the fact that a few cases have recently been approved for public hearing and would soon require their assistance, too.

The Director explained that the challenge facing the investigators is that they must take all of the documents and information submitted by the parties – sometimes quite voluminous – and pare it down to a summary consisting of two or three pages without leaving out anything of importance and will survive any legal challenge. If a case is taken through the Compliance Review process and the complainant is not happy with the outcome, s/he can request reconsideration. A copy of the summary is sent with the scheduling notice to both parties and they have an opportunity to point out any inaccuracies, untruths, etc. Director Morrison stated that seldom is anything found of gross significance that needs to be changed. Generally, the summaries hold up.

Ms McKinley expressed appreciation for the Compliance Review Section not being afraid to look at the discrimination law, to learn it and know it well enough to make those decisions. She also stated that the Solicitor knows the law and provides good advice to staff about what they can deal with or what should be left alone.

B. Director's Report

A written report was mailed to Commissioners prior to today's meeting; Director Morrison highlighted specific items for Commissioners.

Proposed Asian Community Center

Director Morrison reported that he attended a meeting with regard to a proposed Asian American community center as a result of an e-mail he received from Chris Young of the Governor's Advisory Committee on Asian American Affairs.

Chairperson Smith asked if the Asian community has identified any specific issues of significance for them. The Director replied that he originally felt that there is cohesion within the Asian community that many other groups do not have, but after attending this meeting, he acknowledged that he was mistaken about that assumption. The meeting included Chinese and Philippine representatives but there were no Koreans, Vietnamese or Japanese persons present. One of the things that this group is hoping to accomplish is to develop better relations among the various Asian groups. The Director stated that each group tends to keep with its own ethnic group, and as such, one goal is to establish a community center that is welcoming to all.

Director Morrison went on to report that Chris Young, the gentleman facilitating the meeting, stated that he is looking for "bailout" or stimulus money to assist in the establishing the community center. He stated that they are comparing themselves with the Jewish Community Center, which is privately funded and has been in existence for more than 100 years.

A major event for the Asian community of Pittsburgh is the annual Dragon Boat Festival, which this year will be held May 16 from 11 a.m. – 6 p.m. at the South Side Works. This Festival spotlights three dragon boats which are originally from China.

Commissioner Rubio stated that the Asian Film Festival and Silk Screen Festival are also very influential activities among the Asian community. She agreed that there are not many activities in Pittsburgh which are geared to Asian families. Commission Curtis Smith stated that many activities are centered around the universities. Each year the University of Pittsburgh sponsors the Chinese-American Cultural Festival, which the Asian population brings together with food, performances, etc.

The Director stated that there was some discussion about the future development of the arena site and with it, the proposed creation of a "Chinatown District."

Chairperson Smith stated that Commission needs to be sensitive to the needs of each community, and must foster a sense of inclusiveness among all. "The job of this Commission is to make sure people are not disenfranchised – to be aware of needs."

The Director agreed, noting that the most important thing right now is to let them know what the Commission is and why it is here, and that it is appropriate to bring issues related to housing, employment and public accommodations to the Commission. He stated that he relayed to this group the Commission's concerns about recent immigrants and the possibility of them being taken advantaged of.

Chairperson Smith asked the Director to continue to keep in touch with this group and to keep the Commission informed.

C. Committee Reports

Housing Committee

Housing Committee chair, Commissioner Winford Craig, reported that April is designated as Fair Housing Month and presents a good opportunity for education and outreach in the community. Following last month's meeting, staff contacted the Carnegie Library in the Hill as a possible site for the April Commission meeting. It had to be ruled out since the building closes at 7 p.m. Instead, the meeting will be held at the Hill House on April 6 at 6 p.m. (The Compliance Review Section will meet at 5:30 p.m.) Commissioner Craig indicated that he will contact Evan Frazier at the Hill House and ask him support the Commission by promoting attendance at the Commission's meeting.

Commissioner Craig also reported that he had spoken with the state director of the Weed & Seed Program, Nancy Shepard, who agreed to be a presenter at the meeting. As the Hill District is both an enterprise zone and a disadvantaged zone, she could provide value information to the community about various resources available to them, as well as what is not being done that should be done.

Commissioner Craig also reported that the Housing Committee is considering the possibility of inviting Howard Hanna, too, as his real estate service has expressed an interest in focusing on helping middle and low income families in communities like the Hill. Fifth-third Bank, the Urban League and the Courier were also mentioned as influential voices focusing on restoration, predatory lending, mortgage financing, etc.

The Director reiterated that the Commission's meeting in April will be at the Hill House Center. The Compliance Review Section will meet at 5:30 p.m. followed by the full Commission meeting at 6 p.m. It is hoped that there will be some community interaction following the full Commission meeting. Light refreshments will be provided.

Commission Chairperson Adelaide Smith reminded Commissioners that the proposal to take the Commission into the community was to encourage interaction with the community. Dependent upon the number, she envisions those in attendance asking questions and relaying their own issues or concerns. She expressed concern that although it is important to focus on the theme of Fair Housing month, she did not want the agenda to be heavy with presentations.

Commissioner Craig proposed that the Commission meeting be held separately from a community meeting with presenters who may be able to provide housing information to the community. This failed to generate any discussion.

Director Morrison reminded Commissioners that the Commission had voted to take two of their eleven monthly meetings into the community; the July meeting is also planned to be held in the community. The location has not yet been determined and he asked Commissioners to offer their suggestions and input.

Commissioner Curtis Smith suggested the use of conference rooms A & B of Pitt's Student Union would likely be available for use during the summer months when there are fewer students on campus.

Fair Housing Month Activities

Director Morrison enumerated a number of other Fair Housing Month activities in which the Commission would be involved in some way:

March 30 – April 9:

Fair Housing Month Photo Exhibit, Lobby of the City-County Building
Commission staff is organizing this with assistance from the Carnegie Museum of Art, Urban Redevelopment Authority, Pittsburgh Courier, City Planning and the Department of Parks & Recreation. An informational fair and possibly a small reception may be scheduled.

April 15:

Fair Housing Poetry Slam at the Improv, Waterfront in Homestead

Fair Housing Partnership is organizing the event, but the Commission is one of its sponsors by providing one of the monetary prizes.

April 16

Coldwell Banker Program – Current Trends in Fair Housing

Coldwell Banker Training Center
Old Perry Highway, North Hills

IV. MISCELLANEOUS

A. Old Business

Meeting with Mayor

Chairperson Smith reported that she and the Director met with Mayor Ravenstahl on Wednesday, February 25 for approximately 30 minutes. Her goal was to convey to the Mayor the Commission's willingness to be a resource for him and his staff and to keep him aware of what the Commission is doing and to solicit his support. Also discussed was the formation of the proposed LGBT Advisory Committee and the need for the Commission and the Mayor's office to work in concert instead of opposition. Mayor Ravenstahl asked the Commission to suggest naming a Commissioner to serve on this advisory committee to be a liaison to the commission and the community. Commissioner Amanda Rubio immediately volunteered to be that liaison.

The Director said that the Mayor's office is still working out the details of the LGBT Advisory Committee, including how it will operate, how often it will meet, etc. However, he will relay Commissioner Rubio's interest in being appointed to that committee.

The Director also explained that the Commissioners serve on rotating terms which expire each April. Three Commissioners will be up for re-appointment as of April 1. This information, along with the fact that each of those Commissioners is interested in continuing to serve the Commission, was relayed to the Mayor's office in January. Although the Mayor is still working through the process on his end, he does have someone in mind for the vacancy which currently exists on the Commission.

Commissioner Adelaide Smith reported that the Chief of Inter-governmental Relations, Gabe Mazefsky, seems to have a good handle on what the Commission is doing and what it is all about. He seemed genuinely happy to meet with her and the Director. Commission Smith also stated that the Mayor was very gracious, open and wanted to hear what she and the Director had to say.

Director Morrison stated that he also wanted the Mayor to know that the City is obligated to carry out its a Fair Housing Plan as part of its requirement to maintain eligibility for the CDBG funds. If the City does not Affirmatively Further Fair Housing, it risks losing \$19 million. The Director stated that he wanted to be sure that the Mayor knew of the obligations, and had in his hand those documents that related to that obligation, and to let him know that the Commission is working with him in this regard.

B. Announcements

1. Commissioner McDonald announced that she had attended the annual Peace-It-Together Community Initiative, sponsored by The Center and Victims of Violence and Crime, on February 25, 2009. This year's program honored Father Regis Ryan, the Human Services Center Corporation and the Coalition Against Violence.
2. Commissioner Fogarty announced that Mary Burke of Carlow University will be the recipient of an award from the Zonta Club of Pittsburgh. Ms Burke, a member of a group that fights human trafficking, initiated a program at Carlow in the psychology department focusing on feminine social and criminal justice. The presentation will be scheduled during Women's Month – April 9, 2009. She asked Commissioners to look for more information in the media as the time gets closer.
3. Director Morrison informed Commissioners that former Commission Director, John E. Gabriel, passed on February 23, 2009. Mr. Gabriel was director of the Commission for nearly two decades throughout the 1970's and 1980's. He resigned from the Commission in 1990 to become president of the City's Civil Service Commission and eventually went into private law practice with his son. Mr. Gabriel dedicated his life to human rights.

With all business concluded, Commissioner Winford Craig moved to adjourn the meeting at approximately 4:35 p.m. The motion was properly seconded and carried by unanimous vote.

Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations
Director's Report
February 21, 2009

- Feb. 09, 2009 Director Morrison attended the City of Pittsburgh's Black History Month program entitled, "Born to Lead, Called to Serve: A Celebration of African-American Service Organizations."
- Feb. 17, 2009 Director Morrison attended a lecture/discussion group at the University of Pittsburgh's School of Social Work. The program entitled, "Media: Not all Black and White," focused on the role of the print media (with representatives of the *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*) in Pittsburgh and its impact on race relations.
- Feb. 18, 2009 Director Morrison spoke with students from the Duquesne University School of Law with regard to the history of civil rights in Pittsburgh that lead to the creation of the Commission. Also discussed was the Commission's relationship with other civil rights agencies and organizations as part of a coordinated enforcement effort, and an overview of the Commission's process.
- Feb. 24, 2009 Director Morrison met with representatives of the Asian community. The meeting focused on the creation of an Asian Community Center, coordination of Asian Heritage Month activities, and planning for a town hall meeting to identify issues and concerns.