

# Commission on Human Relations Meeting Minutes

Monday, February 5, 2024

**Attendance:** virtual meeting via Zoom and CCB Room 902

## **Commissioners:**

Liddy Barlow, Chair  
Rev. Jaime Gibson  
Tracy Baton  
Teaira Collins  
Carleen King  
Genevieve Rosselot

## **Staff:**

Rita Turpin Porterfield, Senior Investigator  
Shaneise Murray, Senior Investigator  
Lauren Law, Field Investigator  
Kevin Carroll, Administrative Assistant

**Guests:** Pre-registered through Zoom

**I. CALL TO ORDER** - Chair Barlow Called the meeting to Order  
at 3:38 p.m.

## **II. ADOPTION OF MINUTES –**

1. Corrections: None
2. Motion to adopt minutes made by Commissioner Carleen King
3. Seconded by Commissioner Tierra Collins
4. Unanimous voice vote in favor

## **III. PUBLIC COMMENT:**

1. Thea Bowman – Racial Justice Summit rescheduled as a virtual event.

## **IV. COMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORT**

**A. *Director's Report* –**

1. Personnel:
  - a. Deputy Director in person interviews to occur this month
  - b. Senior Investigator on unexpected leave of absence for the foreseeable future.
2. Investigation:
  - a. 69 open cases
  - b. 17 pending intakes
  - c. 7 post-cause cases pending mandatory conciliation
  - d. 6 pending court cases
  - e. CRS is slated to review 11 determinations, including 1 successful conciliation
3. Outreach:
  - a. **SAVE THE DATE – APRIL 3, 2024** for the Housing Summit at the Kelly Strayhorn Theatre.
4. Special Projects

## **B. *Committee Reports***

1. ***Community Relations Committee*** – Read out by Commission King; Met January 16, 2024
  - a. Annual report: 30 pages (approx.); highlight new protections, work over last year, case stats, future goals; considering using a youth arts submission for the cover; each commissioner to submit 1-2 sentence about their “Why” for working on the Commission
  - b. LGBTQIA+ housing research, report expected end of year
  - c. March Community Meeting: 3/4/2024 3:30-5P; Commissioners to share with networks; Commissioner Collins to share with Pittsburgh Public Transit
  - d. Human Rights City Alliance Liaison: staff member(s) will participate and report to Commission at large
  - e. Housing Summit 4/3/2024 – meetings every other Monday (starting 2/12/2024); Open to commissioners
  - f. General outreach: housing court help desk; building coalitions, TikTok, CityChannel
  - g. Committee administration: committee must elect a chairperson; Commissioner King would like to be included on committee.

2. ***Justice & Equity Committee*** – None at this time
3. ***Finance Committee*** –
  - a. EORC contracts approved; first known LGBTQ+ contractor
  - b. Sponsoring Racial Justice Summit Closed Captioning
  - c. Facilitating housing summit as referenced in Director's Report
4. ***Personnel Committee*** –
  - a. Acting Deputy Director serving as Director in Rachel's absence first week of February
  - b. Unexpected absence of an investigative staff; thank you to remaining staff for picking up the work
5. ***Public Hearing Section*** - None at this time
6. ***Executive Committee*** – None at this time

#### **V.OLD BUSINESS –**

- a. Community Meeting:
- b. Commissioners, please come and meet to interacted with community members who have lived experience in barriers in language preference and/or criminal justice system involvement
- c. Please share with others and ensure better community input
- d. Spanish interpretation present; will work w/ CASA San Jose to remind them of providing representatives to attend.
- e. Have translation services on standby → Rita to check with Rachel/Courtney

#### **VI.NEW BUSINESS**

- a. Met regarding next steps Strategic Planning Meeting
- b. SOAR survey on the way; Commissioners please participate
- c. Please mark March 11, 2024 for meeting to review SOAR results.

#### **VII.ADJOURNMENT –**

- a. Motion made by Commissioner Genevieve Rosselot
- b. Seconded by Commissioner Tracy Baton
- c. Unanimous vote in favor at 4:17 p.m.

EDWARD C. GAINEY  
MAYOR



RACHEL SHEPHERD  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

CITY OF PITTSBURGH  
**COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS**  
CITY-COUNTY BUILDING

**Monthly Commission Meeting Agenda**

February 5, 2024

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. MEETING MINUTES
  - a. 1/8/2024
3. PUBLIC COMMENTS
4. COMMITTEES
  - a. FINANCE COMMITTEE
  - b. PERSONNEL COMMITTEE
  - c. COMMUNITY RELATIONS
    - i. Report from 1/16/2024 meeting
5. DIRECTOR'S REPORT
6. OLD BUSINESS
  - a. Community Commission Meeting in March
7. NEW BUSINESS
  - a. Strategic Planning Next Steps
8. ADJOURNMENT

Commission on Human Relations Meeting Minutes

Monday, January 8, 2024

**Attendance:** 9<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room, City County Bldg. and virtual meeting via Zoom.

**Commissioners:**

- Namikta Dwarkanath
- Tierra Collins
- Carleen King
- Alberto Benzaquen
- Rev. Liddy, Chair
- Genevieve Rosselot
- Wasi Mohamed
- Luz Blandon

**Staff:**

Rachel Shepherd Executive Director  
Rita Turpin Porterfield, Acting Deputy Director  
Shaneise Murray, Senior Investigator  
Jeffrey Cameron, Senior Investigator  
Lauren Law, Field Investigator  
Kevin Carroll, Administrative Assistant  
Courtney Smith

**Guests:** Pre-registered through Zoom

**I. CALL TO ORDER** - Chair Barlow Called the meeting to Order at 3:34pm

**II. ADOPTION OF MINUTES –**

1. Corrections: None.
2. Motion to adopt minutes, including any corrections noted above, made by Commissioner Dwarakanath
3. Seconded by Commissioner King
4. Unanimous voice vote in favor

**III. PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Erie County Human Relations Commission, Director Kelly. History – founded in 1997; periods of inactivity. Two staff for the whole county, more recently activated in 2023. 20 board members including enforcement and advisory panels.

**IV. COMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORT**

**A. Director's Report –**

1. Personnel: hiring for deputy director position; candidates must be willing to relocate within City limits/maintain residency. This and salaries are non-negotiable.
2. Investigation:
  - a. 62 open cases
  - b. 10 pending intakes
  - c. 8 post-cause cases pending mandatory conciliation
  - d. 6 pending court cases
  - e. CRS to review 11 determinations including 1 conciliation; on track to meet annual closure goals after 1<sup>st</sup> quarter.
4. Outreach:
  - a. Community Commission meeting in March

1. Beechview Library
2. Topics: Criminal history impact and language access
- b. Fair Housing Landlord training:  
<https://fairhousingpittsburgh.rsvpify.com>
- c. Planning Fair Housing Month, commissioner participation welcome; Teams meeting at 12N every other Monday
- d. Literature drop offs at various locations; most recent focus on survivors of domestic violence in housing.
- e. Know Your Rights training is scheduled with Jewish Family and Community Services 1/18/2024 with career and refugee services stall. RentHelpPGH is the next partner for a Know Your Rights campaign
4. Special Projects – Director Shepherd will be out of office for the next Commission meeting/first week of February; will put in acting paperwork for Acting Deputy Director, Rita Porterfield

#### B. *Committee Reports*

1. ***Community Relations Committee*** – has not met; need a meeting on the calendar to help plan community meeting and Housing Summit coming up this spring (March and April).
2. ***Finance Committee*** –
  - a. Has not met since last meeting. Updates, however, include approval of 2024 budget. Rachel presented asks with amazing poise, but Council chose not to expand staff or grant additional position for an outreach person.
  - b. EORC requirement for solicitor bid to be presented at January meeting
  - c. Finalized contract with Studio for LGBTQIA+ work
3. ***Personnel Committee*** – has not met since last Commission meeting; search for Deputy Director Continues
4. ***Public Hearing Section*** – has not met; no hearings on the docket
5. ***Executive Committee*** – no report

**V.OLD BUSINESS** – Championship Chase Black History Month segment. Interview via Zoom; Commissioner King will conduct the interview, with assistance from staff on content.

#### **VI.NEW BUSINESS**

- a. Strategic Planning Meeting 1/11/2024 at 12:05p via Zoom
- b. Racial Justice Summit → 1/19 and 1/20 at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary
- c. Community Commission Meeting → March, in Beechview

#### **VII.ADJOURNMENT** –

- a. Motion made by Commissioner Rosselot
- b. Seconded by Commissioner Dwarakanath
- c. Unanimous vote in favor at 4:04 p.m.



CITY OF PITTSBURGH  
**COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS**  
CITY-COUNTY BUILDING

**Community Relations Committee**

January 16, 2024

**Attendance:** Tracy Baton, Liddy Barlow, Genevieve Rosselot, Teaira Collins, Jamie Gibson, Alberto Benzaquen, Rachel Shepherd, Rita Porterfield

- 1) Annual report
  - a. ~30 pages, outreach, highlights new protections, work completed last year, case statistics, and upcoming work
  - b. Youth arts contest submission as cover?
  - c. Highlight the commissioners with a 1-2 sentence biography and 1-2 sentences on why you are on the Commission
- 2) LGBTQIA+ housing research
  - a. Beginning now; should have report by end of year
- 3) March Community Commission Meeting
  - a. Beechview Library, March 4th, 3:30-5pm
  - b. Share flyer
    - i. Teaira will share with Pittsburgh Public Transit
- 4) Human Rights City Alliance Liaison
  - a. Staff can participate and report out
- 5) Planning and Promoting Fair Housing Summit
  - a. Meeting every other Monday – open to Commissioners
- 6) General Outreach Suggestions
  - a. Housing Court Help Desk
  - b. Building coalitions, raising all ships
  - c. TikTok
  - d. use City Channel
- 7) Follow-up
  - a. Elect a committee chairperson



## **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

February 5, 2024

### **PERSONNEL AND ADMINISTRATION**

- Of the 16 applications received for the position of Deputy Director, seven were chosen for telephone interviews. In the invitation for the interviews, we made clear that the salary is non-negotiable as is the requirement to live in the City. Five phone interviews have been completed as of 1/29/2024.
- Investigator Jeffrey Cameron has been out of the office unexpectedly. While he is out, we have reassigned his cases to the other investigators. Thank you to the staff for stepping in to assist!

### **CASES AND ENFORCEMENT**

- As of 1/29/2024 there are:
  - 69 open cases
  - 17 pending intakes
  - 7 post-cause cases pending mandatory conciliation
  - 6 pending court cases.
- Compliance Review will see 11 determinations this month, including one successful conciliation.

### **EDUCATION AND OUTREACH**

- **SAVE THE DATE!** Our housing summit will be held on April 3, 2024 at the Kelly Strayhorn Theater. Language access best practices, cultural competency, criminal history assessments and their impact of housing providers who receive federal funding.
- Triggered by an outreach packet we mailed a representative from AIDS Free Pittsburgh contacted me to discuss the potential for adding HIV as a specific protected class here in Pittsburgh. We are exploring the benefit and impact of adding this protection.
- A successful Know Your Rights training was held with Jewish Family and Community Services on January 18, 2024. Eight of their staff were in attendance and stated that they learned a lot of helpful information for working with the folks they serve.
- I am meeting with Zeke Rediker and Chief of Staff Jake Wheatley on January 31, 2024 to discuss our overlapping priorities and how we can best collaborate. Will report out next month.
- A housing provider training was held on January 31<sup>st</sup> in collaboration with the Fair Housing Partnership. Will report out next month on how many housing providers we engaged.

EDWARD C. GAINES  
MAYOR



RACHEL SHEPHERD  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

- Commissioner Barlow connected me with LaWana Butler of the Foundation of Hope. We are still working to schedule a meeting.
- On February 14, 2024, I'll be engaging with the fifth grade Arrow of Light den in Cub Scout Pack 343 on the Commission's civil rights work. Excited to be reaching our younger community members! I also have an inquiry in to the Principal of my daughter's elementary school (West Liberty) about attending career day to get our foot in the door with Pittsburgh Public again.
- On February 21, 2024 the City will celebrate International Mother Language Day. This should involve cultural celebration, a press conference, and more. There is a planning meeting on February 1<sup>st</sup> that I will participate in. I will provide additional details for anyone who is interested in attending.



Pittsburgh Commission  
On Human Relations

## COMMUNITY MEETING

Join the city's civil rights agency for its regular monthly meeting. We invite you to share with us your experiences trying to get work, find housing and access services. Has **criminal history** or **language access** created barriers for you or those you know?

**MARCH 4, 2024**  
**3:30 PM TO 5 PM**  
**BEECHVIEW CARNEGIE**  
**LIBRARY**

**Spanish**  
**interpreters will**  
**attend**

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Pittsburgh Commission  
On Human Relations

## REUNIÓN COMUNITARIA

Participe en la reunión mensual del organismo de derechos civiles de la ciudad. Lo invitamos a que comparta sus experiencias de búsqueda laboral, búsqueda de vivienda y acceso a servicios. ¿Los **antecedentes penales** o su **acceso al idioma** han sido obstáculos para usted o para sus conocidos?

**4 DE MARZO**  
**DE 2024 15:30 - 17:00**  
**BIBLIOTECA BEECHVIEW**  
**CARNEGIE**

**Habrán intérpretes de**  
**español**

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