

Commission on Human Relations Meeting Minutes

Monday, October 7, 2024

Attendance: 9th Floor Conference Room, City County Bldg. and virtual meeting via Zoom.

Commissioners:

- Tierra Collins, Chair
- Genevieve Rosselot
- Rabbi Jamie Gibson
- Luz Blandon
- Namita Dwarakanath
- Mary Jane McCullough
- Alberto Benzaquen

Staff:

Rachel Shepherd Executive Director
Christopher Sault, Deputy Director
Rita Turpin Porterfield, Senior Investigator
Jeffrey Cameron, Senior Investigator
Lauren Law, Senior Investigator
Kevin Carroll, Administrative Assistant
Courtney Smith, Fiscal and Contracting Coordinator

Guests: Pre-registered through Zoom

- Maddy McGrady, Global Switchboard
- Megan Rose, Standing Firm
- Thea Young, Pittsburgh Racial Justice Summit
 - SAVE THE DATE 2/22/2025

I. CALL TO ORDER - Chair Collins Called the meeting to Order at 3:34p

II. ADOPTION OF MINUTES –

1. Corrections: Add Cmr. Liddy Barlow
2. Motion to adopt minutes, including any corrections noted above, made by Commissioner Rabbi Gibson
3. Seconded by Commissioner Rosselot
4. Unanimous voice vote in favor

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT: Thea Young, Pittsburgh Racial Justice Summit SAVE THE DATE 2/22/2025

V. COMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORT

A. Director's Report –

1. Personnel:
 - a. Waiver was secured! Met with Amanda Neatrour, formerly of EnterChange Group, to discuss takeover of strategic planning. Looking for Commissioners to meet and discuss SOAR Survey results. But input and data already gathered
 - b. David Ellwood will be here from PCRB, transfer/bid.
 - c. Hired college inter Emilia Morris (Pitt)
 - d. Secured 2 new volunteer mediators and Chris Sault and Lauren Law have completed Conflict Lab Mediation Training.
2. Investigation:
 - a. End of year:

1. 19 housing cases (HUD only requires 13)
 2. 46 employment cases (46 required by EEOC)
 3. 3 Public accommodations
 4. 0 civil rights
 - b. As of 10/2/2024
 1. 55 open cases
 2. 52 pending intakes
 3. 13 post-cause cases; 12 cases pending mandatory conciliation; 3 in court
 4. 7 public hearing cases; October 29, 2024 first scheduled public hearing. Need remaining scheduled for new year.
 5. CRS to review 11 cases this month, including 2 settlements.
 - c. Medical Marijuana Patient protections passed; 1 inquiry so far, outside of City so referred to EEOC who will refer to PA Commission (cannot be intake, refer to PA Commission, only w/ EEOC)
3. Education and Outreach:
- a. Final City in the Streets was 9/4/2024 in Homewood; thanks to Commissions who did make it out for tabling
 - b. 9/7/24 Chris Soult attending a Housing Resource Fair to table
 - c. Dir. Shepherd conducted a training for Staff of NeighborWorks on 9/25/24 to explain how Commission can help in homebuying
 - d. Pitt Law had a CROWN Act featuring Rep. La'Tasha Mayes and Rita Porterfield was also a speaker
4. –
- a. Cmr. Barlow met w/ Fardeep Kaleka of Hate/Bias Action Team for Not in Our Town; Dir.
 - b. County Commission on Human Relations: Looking to add 2 investigators and share case processing strategies; working with Lauren DeDominc from County Executive's Office. Eager to help to create a referral partner for cases outside the City.
 - c. Staff are in initial stages of planning training session for local labor organizations to fulfill our EEOC Joint Innovation Grant obligation for 2024. Looking for more connections with local unions.
 - d. Office of Nighttime Economy (Allison Harnden and Bret Kunah) looking to promote LGBTQIA+ Housing Survey
5. Special Projects –
- a. Community Relations Cmte. Has been discussing youth outreach
 1. Cmr. Rabbi Gibson suggested East End Cooperative Ministry and Beth Haven Shelter as distribution for youth outreach
 2. Dir. Shepherd to ask for outlets from commissioners
 - b. Extending Housing Survey through end of October. PLEASE SHARE with networks <https://lgbtqia-rights.house>

- c. Welcoming Communities group is finalizing the Renting to Newcomers presentation, which is for landlords and to encourage landlords to accept immigrant, refugees, etc. as tenants. Once this is scheduled, Dir. Shepherd will let everyone know so everyone can help advertise.

B. Committee Reports

1. **Community Relations Committee** –
 - a. Homelessness: gathering research and support to add as a protections
 - b. Greyhound conditions may move forward with a focus on disability
 - c. Medical Marijuana passed but with amendments regarding union workers
 - d. Talked about having another community commission meeting; looking for less traditional outreach and youth outreach.
2. **Justice & Equity Committee** – No update; has not met
3. **Finance Committee** –
 - a. Finally permitted to access HUD Funds
 - b. City rejected \$10,000 ask for new budget proposals
 - c. Rabbi Gibson: anticipating cuts; possible to convert positions through other streams of funding.
4. **Personnel Committee** –
 1. Director review is in progress
 2. Should be fully staffed with onboarding of investigator; awaiting finalization.
5. **Public Hearing Section** – has not met;
6. **Executive Committee** – has not met

V. OLD BUSINESS – None

VI. NEW BUSINESS --

- A. Committee Assignments: No changes; if anyone wants moved, can be upon request to Director Shepherd
- B. Ethics Department – Leanne David, available to assist in case Commissioners need advice on ethics or conflict of interests; pittsburghpa.gov/ehb/advice

VII. ADJOURNMENT –

- a. Motion made by Commissioner Rosselot
- b. Seconded by Commissioner Rabbi Gibson
- c. Unanimous vote in favor at 4:13 p.m.



CITY OF PITTSBURGH
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS
RACHEL SHEPHERD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Monthly Commission Meeting Agenda

October 7, 2024

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. MEETING MINUTES
 - a. 8/19/2024
3. PUBLIC COMMENTS
4. COMMITTEES
 - a. FINANCE
 - b. PERSONNEL
 - c. COMMUNITY RELATIONS
5. DIRECTOR'S REPORT
6. OLD BUSINESS
7. NEW BUSINESS
 - a. COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS
8. ADJOURNMENT



CITY OF PITTSBURGH
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS
RACHEL SHEPHERD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Commission on Human Relations Meeting Minutes
Monday, August 19, 2024

Attendance: 9th Floor Conference Room, City County Bldg. and virtual meeting via Zoom.

Commissioners:

- Teaira Collins, Chair
- Genevieve Rosselot, 1st Vice Chair
- Rabbi Jamie Gibson, 2nd Vice Chair
- Luz Blandon
- Kyle C. Webster
- Namita Dwarakanath
- Mary Jane McCullough
- Alberto Benzaquen

Staff:

- Rachel Shepherd Executive Director
- Christopher Soult, Deputy Director
- Rita Turpin Porterfield, Senior Investigator
- Lauren Law, Senior Investigator
- Kevin Carroll, Administrative Assistant
- Courtney Smith, Fiscal Contracts Coordinator

No guests pre-registered through Zoom

- I. **CALL TO ORDER** - Chair Collins 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 Rosselot
 3. Seconded by Commissioner Rabbi Gibson
 4. Unanimous voice vote in favor
- III. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** Introduction of Ryan Walter, Summer Law Clerk
- IV. **COMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORT**
 - A. **Director's Report** –
 1. Personnel:
 - (a) Met with Amanda Neatrou, formerly of EnterChange Group, to discuss takeover of strategic planning. Looking for waiver instead of Request for Proposals. Had applied through Office of Management and Budget (only) but now must also go through Law, Law Department is reviewing waiver. Council will need to reconvene and vote on resolution if Law clears. May lose funding

if this does not get approved. If approved, looking for Commissioners to meet and discuss SOAR Survey results.

1. 37 applications reviewed for Investigator position; 9 phone interviews to be scheduled.
2. 40 applications for fall intern. Director will be redacting. Looking for someone to help prepare guidance and facts sheets for new civil rights protections.
3. Partnering with Duquesne for a work study position. Duquesne said it was willing to cover associated costs, and we are looking for students motivated in civil rights work.

2. Investigation:

1. 53 open cases
2. 27 pending intakes
3. 17 post-cause cases; 12 cases pending mandatory conciliation; 2 reconsideration;
4. 6 public hearing cases; October 29, 2024 first scheduled public hearing. Need remaining scheduled for new year.
5. 3 pending court cases
6. CRS to review 14 cases this month, including 3 settlements.

3. Education and Outreach:

1. Staff attended National Fair Housing Alliance Conference in Washington, D.C.
2. This was a fair housing initiatives program (FHIP) focused event, but we learned a lot about the struggles in the advocate realm of fair housing, which will better inform our efforts as an enforcement agency.
3. Housing provider training in conjunction with Fair Housing Partnership
4. Had briefing on July 9, 2024 with City Council to elaborate on the Commission's mission and abilities. Staff members and members of council from almost every district were in attendance; left outreach materials
5. International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies ("IAOHRA") Conference in St. Louis – Rachel, Chris, Rita, and Courtney attended. Theme was "Creating a Culture of Human Rights"
 - a. Christopher Sault – in a good position compared to some offices nationally, but there are good protections that Pittsburgh could learn from and add to our own code. Examples are military discharge status, credit record for employment, and homelessness status (or housing status).
 - b. Rachel Shepherd – very open, good networking experience
 - c. Rita Porterfield – appraisal discrimination tool kit was very informative and provided practical answers for how to investigate an appraisal discrimination case.
 - d. Pittsburgh may consider hosting an IAOHRA conference in 2026 or thereafter.
 - e. 2025 Conference in Philadelphia, and interested Commissioners should let Director Shepherd know.
6. Invited by Lawrenceville United to housing resource tabling even on September 7, 2024

7. Commission has four (4) fair housing bus shelter advertisements running from August to October
4. Special Projects –
 - a. Carter Center at the end of July to attend Expert Workshop on Human Rights in the United States. Mission is to promote human rights domestically. Ongoing connection at IAOHRA
 - b. Deputy Director and Director met with Office of Community Health and Safety (OCHS) re Greyhound and Homelessness protections, expecting data. Also invited to meet with Homeless Outreach Coordinating Committee to discuss data sharing.
 - c. Attended Mayor’s Disability Rights Rally where ADA Coordinate and Office of Equal Protection outlined their 3-year strategic plan. First plan in 32 years
 - d. Met with Anne Marie Ellison of the Office of Equal Protection
 - e. Met with NeighborWorks to discuss staff training and being a part of bi-weekly homebuyer education workshops. Offered a video
 - f. EEOC joint CLE; looking to do annual to work with legal community in Pittsburgh to navigate through administrative process; positive feedback from attendees received
 - g. Community Relations Committee has discussed youth outreach and is beginning to plan fall activities. Considering high school target audience. May be able to reach out to/through Central Office.
 - h. Staff are in initial stages of planning training session for local labor organizations to fulfill our EEOC Joint Innovation Grant obligation for 2024. Looking for more connections with local unions.
 - i. Our LGBTQIA+ Housing Research vendor, Outwith Studio, prepared an interactive exhibit for Pittsburghers to create zines about their housing experience; details of the exhibit are attached. Full survey NOW LIVE! Please share <https://lgbtqia-rights.house/> Open to translation to better meet needs of intersectionality. Biggest hang-up would be specific survey would be host site. Cmr. McCullough recommended pre-translation instead of on site translation (hardest modality).
 - j. Medical marijuana protections tabled until Council reconvenes. Trade union membership (not necessarily leadership) now seeming to express concerns about such legislation.

B. Committee Reports

1. Community Relations Committee –

- a. Attended City in the Street this past weekend
- b. Greyhound situation ongoing.
 1. Discussing with County about persons being stranded at the station. There may be a communication issue that may be resolvable if all parties could come together.
 2. Greyhound has been referring everyone who has a ticket issue to Casa San Jose regardless of discriminatory basis; but does not change that there are situations of discriminatory bias or behavior.

3. Has not gone to Greyhound directly as of yet so as not to overstep the City services being provided in active needs bases and situation.
 4. There is not accurate contact information for Greyhound because of parties not being forthcoming with information.
 5. Cmr. McCullough concerned that we are not listening to third party organizations or agencies as an undue influencer. Director Shepherd acknowledged that we should be neutral and recognize there are other classes affected, but because there are no direct complainants, Commission is reliant upon third parties for evidence.
 6. What can Commissioners do to help? Right now, there may be a lack of trust to file. It is hard to know what is really going on. If anyone felt passionately enough to speak with partners like Casa San Jose. Director in a position of risking partnerships and retaliatory Greyhound closure.
 7. Additional meeting with Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs to better coordinated with City efforts
 8. County is also giving mixed signals by asking us not to file but then directing witnesses/complainants to Commission.
Investigators will need to gather information to determine posture and evidence for Commission initiated complaint.
2. **Justice & Equity Committee** – No update; has not met
 3. **Finance Committee** –
 - a. Budget meeting was rescheduled to today
 - b. Ask for \$10,000 approx. to reclassify a position
 - c. Emphasized with Mayor's Office and Office of Management and Budget that this ask is minimal cost with a great impact
 - d. With the departure of Zeke Redeker, Annemarie Ellison is the person acting to take on Zeke's duties, role, and point of contact.
 4. **Personnel Committee** –
 - a. Has solicited feedback for Director's review. Chair Collins and Cmr. Barlow has to put together a draft for review and finished report for Director Shepherd's performance.
 - b. Final review to be released by next meeting
 5. **Public Hearing Section** – has not met;
 6. **Executive Committee** – has not met

V.OLD BUSINESS – None

VI.NEW BUSINESS -- None

VII.ADJOURNMENT –

- a. Motion made by Commissioner Rabbi Gibson
- b. Seconded by Commissioner Rosselot
- c. Unanimous vote in favor at 4:50 p.m.



CITY OF PITTSBURGH
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS
RACHEL SHEPHERD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

October 7, 2024

PERSONNEL AND ADMINISTRATION

- After much discussion with law and the budget office we secured a waiver of the competitive process for our strategic planning contract and will be moving forward with Amanda Neatrour of Lewis Neatrour Group.
- We hired an Investigator! David Ellwood is joining us from the Citizens' Police Review Board
- We hired a Fall College Intern! Emilia Morris is a student at Pitt with a plethora of experience.
- We have secured two new volunteer mediators to work with the Commission. Also, Chris and Lauren just completed mediation training with The Conflict Lab and will begin shadowing other mediators.

CASES AND ENFORCEMENT

- Case processing for 2023-2024:
 - 19 housing cases (13 required by HUD)
 - 46 employment cases (46 required by EEOC)
 - 3 public accommodation cases
 - 0 civil rights cases
- As of 10/2/2024 there are:
 - 55 open investigations;
 - 42 pending intakes;
 - 15 post-cause cases (3 in court, 12 pending mandatory conciliation); and
 - 7 cases on the public hearing track.
- Compliance Review will see 11 determinations this month, including 2 settlements.
- An employment public hearing is scheduled for October 29th. Anyone interested in the public hearing process is encouraged to attend, as we are seeing an uptick in hearings.
- The Medical Marijuana Patient protections were officially passed with an amendment to exclude protection for employees who are applying for positions within a collective bargaining agreement. This means that the Commission can now investigate employment discrimination complaints involving medical marijuana patients who are cardholders and treating qualifying disabilities under the PA Medical Marijuana Act.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

- The final City in the Streets was held on September 4th in Homewood. Thank you again to the Commissioners who made it out to assist with tabling at these events.
- Chris attended a Housing Resource Fair on September 7th to provide information on fair housing.
- On September 21st I presented for the Urban League Homeownership Workshop, which Jeffrey shadowed to be able to present in the future.
- I conducted a training for the staff of NeighborWorks on September 25th to explain what we do and how we can be helpful to their homeownership process.
- We were asked to speak at the Natural Hair Discrimination Community Forum put on by Representative La'Tasha Mayes. Rita spoke on behalf of the Commission as she had participated in crafting the legislation and guidance for the City's hair protections.

MEETINGS AND NEW CONNECTIONS

- Commissioner Barlow connected me with Pardeep Kaleka of the Hate/Bias Action Team for Not in Our Town. I am working to schedule a meeting to discuss how we can mutually support each other.
- Chairperson Collins and I attended the Pennsylvania Commission on Human Relations "Beloved Communities" meeting on September 26th. They are currently touring the state to meet in every county and receive feedback from the community on issues of discrimination and hate. I am trying to reconnect with Pittsburgh Director LaDawn Robinson to see how we can collaborate moving forward.
- We were contacted by Lauren DeDomenic from County Executive Sara Innamorato's office with regard to the county obtaining work sharing agreements with the EEOC and HUD. Chris and I met with her on September 30th to discuss our processes with those entities. There is a lot of work to be done to elevate the County Commission, but we are enthusiastic and eager to help so that the constituents that contact our office have a place to go if we cannot assist them. We also offered to do a training for the county executive's staff on our Commission to further educate them on our processes and mandates.
- I connected with Allison Harnden and Bret Kunash of the Office of Nighttime Economy. Allison is helping to promote our LGBTQIA+ Housing Survey, and we are looking at working together on public accommodations issues as well.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

- The Community Relations Committee has been discussing youth outreach and is helping staff develop youth-focused handouts. At the meeting on 9/30 the idea of

connecting with the youth commission, parent-focused handouts, and making more direct contacts with schools within PPS were discussed.

- Our LGBTQIA+ Housing Research survey was released in mid-August. While this was initially due to run through 9/30 we are extending the survey to the end of October to obtain additional responses. PLEASE SHARE WIDELY: <https://lgbtqia-rights.house>
- The Welcoming Communities group is finalizing the Renting to Newcomers presentation, which is for landlords to educate and encourage them to accept immigrant, refugees, etc. as tenants. Once this is scheduled I will let everyone know so they can help advertise.

**Commission on Human Relations
Sections and Committees, October 2024-September 2025**

Sections

Compliance Review Section Genevieve Rosselot, Chair Alberto Benzaquén Luz Blandon Jamie Gibson Namita Dwarakanath	Public Hearing Section Liddy Barlow, Chair Teaira Collins Wasi Mohamed Mary Jayne McCullough Carleen King
Motions Commissioner: Kyle Webster	

Committees

Executive Committee Teaira Collins, Chair Genevieve Rosselot, 1st Vice Chair Jamie Gibson, 2nd Vice Chair Alberto Benzaquén, Secretary Carleen King, Treasurer	Community Relations Committee Namita Dwarakanath, Committee Chair Liddy Barlow Alberto Benzaquén Teaira Collins Jamie Gibson Genevieve Rosselot Luz Blandon Carleen King Mary Jayne McCullough Kyle Webster
Finance Committee Teaira Collins (ex officio) Carleen King, Treasurer/Committee Chair Luz Blandon	Personnel Committee Liddy Barlow, Committee Chair Teaira Collins Wasi Mohamed Mary Jayne McCullough

As of 10/7/2024