

MINUTES

CHICAGO COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS (CCHR) BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING December 14, 2023

Attendance

Commissioners Present:

Nancy Andrade, Chair	Daniel Hernandez	Butch Trusty
Jamie Brown	Mirna Holton	
Marta Cerda	Jin-Soo Huh	
Jennifer Eleazar	Ray Koenig III	
Daniel Goldwin	Michael Takada	

Staff Present:

Kenneth Gunn	Kristen Lee	Norman White
Marisol Gallegos	JoAnn Newsome	

Call to Order

After a brief overview and commemoration of the Hanukkah holiday led by Daniel Goldwin, Commissioner Nancy Andrade called the meeting to order at 9: 50 a.m. and Kenneth Gunn recorded the minutes. A quorum of board of commissioners was present, and the meeting, having been duly convened, was ready to proceed with business.

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Andrade presented the minutes of the September 21, 2023, Board meeting to the Board for approval, where upon a motion was duly made by Ray Koenig, III to adopt as written, seconded by Mirna Holton, and unanimously adopted. The minutes were approved as presented.

A motion to move into Executive Session was duly made by Ray Koenig, III, seconded by Daniel Goldwin, and unanimously adopted.

Adjudication Review Committee

Morelia Vega v Tender Care Systems, Inc. CCHR No. 18-E-13

Deputy Commissioner JoAnn Newsome provided a summary of the case. The complainant alleged that she was a victim of employment discrimination in that she was sexually harassed at her place of employment by a co-worker. She also alleged that the respondent took no action to address her concerns, and later retaliated against her. The Hearing Officer determined that the complainant's testimony was not credible due to inconsistencies in her testimony and found her recitation of the facts incredible. Furthermore, the complainant did not provide any witnesses to support her allegations. Therefore, the Hearing Officer recommended a finding of no liability on behalf of the respondent. The Adjudication Panel agreed with the Hearing Officer's recommendation but agreed to make non-substantive changes in the language used by the hearing officer. A motion to accept the panel's recommendation was made by Daniel Goldwin, seconded by Mirna Holton, and passed unanimously.

A motion to close the executive session was made by Ray Koenig III, seconded by Jin-Soo Huh, and passed unanimously.

Commissioner's Report

Before giving her report, Commissioner Andrade introduced two new members of the board, both of whom serve on the board through their capacities as representatives of the advisory councils: Jin-Soo Huh, the new chair of the LGBTQ+ Council and Jennifer Eleazar, from the Women's Council.

In her report, Commissioner Andrade informed the board that the amendments to the City's Hate Crime Ordinance passed in City Council December 13, 2023. She explained that the amendment adds hate incidents to the ordinance. It will also require 311 to develop mechanisms to allow the public to report hate incidents that the Chicago Police Department (CPD) will be responsible for tracking, and the CCHR will be responsible for providing victim assistance. She mentioned that she is concerned that the number of new reports will require additional staff, and a possible expansion of the CCHR's office space. The commissioner stated that we will monitor the number of requests for assistance received before requesting additional staff. Daniel Goldwin read the definition of a hate incident from the ordinance in response to the board asking how a hate incident differs from a hate crime.

Commissioner Andrade also reported that details of the new CCHR Hate Crime Pilot Program are being ironed out by CCHR and CPD before the community organizations taking part in the program are brought in. She also mentioned that the new "Think Before You Hate" campaign has kicked off. The campaign features ads on CTA trains, buses, and signs in the CTA transit stations.

Unit Reports

Adjudication

JoAnn Newsome reported that the Adjudication Division will be busy for the next few weeks onboarding the new investigators Daniel Patlan and Ingrid Upchurch. Director of Compliance for Fair Housing Kristen Lee added that the unit will also be working on closing out as many cases as possible before the end of the year.

Intergroup Relations Unit

Director of Intergroup Relations Daniel Serrano was absent for the meeting, so Commissioner Andrade provided a brief report for the unit. She stated that the unit is working with the City on the relief efforts for the recent arrivals. She reported that Aracelis Baez will be providing "Know Your Rights" presentations at some of the housing facilities. Commissioner Andrade added that Aracelis is also conducting workshops for Chicago Public School parents through its Parents University primarily about Bullying. Jamie Brown commented that she is involved in volunteer outreach for the new arrivals and has heard about complaints of wage theft by some employers who hire them. Jin-Soo Huh added that he has been made aware of LGBTQ+ new arrivals being bullied at the shelters. Ray Koenig, III announced that the Chicago Bar Foundation and the Chicago Bar Association are looking for lawyers to volunteer to assist new arrivals and added that training will be provided.

Advisory Councils

Women's Council

The Women's Advisory Council representative, Jennifer Eleazar, reported that the council has just welcomed a new slate of members. One of the issues under consideration is whether to change the name from the Advisory Council on Women to another name more expansive and inclusive of other identities.

LGBTQ+ Council

Jin-Soo Huh, the new chair of the LGBTQ+ Council reported that their council also recently welcomed several new members. He stated, the council continues to meet quarterly. One of the council's objectives is to work with the city to hire a full-time director for the council. The council is also restructuring its subcommittees, with the goal of having four working subcommittees. He also mentioned that the council continues to produce a quarterly newsletter which will be coming out soon. Jin-Soo also reported that the council is interested in collaborating with the other councils on collective issues of importance. Jennifer mentioned that she would like to have a shared calendar that lists the meetings of all the councils.

Veterans

In the absence of the council chair, Dr. Terrell Odom, Ken Gunn provided a brief report of the council's activities. He stated that several new members were also recently added to the Veterans Council. He also reported that the council continues to support different events in the veterans community.

New Business

Commissioner Andrade reported that she recently served on a "Human Rights/Know Your Rights" panel discussion organized by CAIR. The event included representatives from the State and the County. Commissioner Andrade mentioned that she was very pleased that the Chicago executive director of CAIR made it clear in his opening remarks that the goal of the program was to work together to fight against hate and discrimination of all people, and he specifically stated that he wants to work closer with the Jewish community on these issues.

Jamie Brown asked Commissioner Andrade if the Commission was aware of the recent hate incidents targeting the Ukrainian community, where someone has been placing "Zs" on Ukrainian institutions including the Ukrainian Museum, churches, and other locations. The Letter "Z" has come to represent the Russian Army, and likewise an allegiance with Russia in the current war with Ukraine. Commissioner Andrade responded that the Commission was aware of the incidents; she then asked Norman White, CCHR's Hate Crime Advocate, to report on his work on the issue. Norman mentioned that he contacted the Chicago Police Department about the incidents and went with the police to visit the museum and spoke to the staff. He told them to encourage their community members to report these incidents to the police so they can be investigated as hate crimes. Norman also mentioned that the police have given "special attention" to the museum which will be hosting an upcoming program soon.

Old Business

None

There being no further business to come before the board, a motion to adjourn was duly made by Ray Koenig, III and was seconded by Marta Cerda, and unanimously adopted. The meeting was adjourned at 10:40 a.m.