



MINUTES

BOARD OF EQUAL RIGHTS COMMISSIONERS October 21, 2015 at 3:00 PM in Room 303 of City Hall

Present:

Aldira Aldape
Marquette Baylor
Mayhoua Moua
Chez Ordonez
Jeffrey Roman, Chair

Maria Monteagudo, Employee Relations Director
Kristin Urban, Human Resources Compliance Officer
MaryNell Regan, Fire and Police Commission Executive Director

Absent: None

Commissioner Roman commenced the meeting at 3:05 p.m.

1. Approval of minutes from the May 20, 2015 ERC meeting.

Commissioner Aldape moved approval of the May 20, 2015 minutes; the motion was seconded by Commissioner Baylor. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Ms. Monteagudo asked that that ERC discuss agenda item #3 prior to discussion of agenda item #2. The Chair agreed to take the agenda items out of order.

2. Budgetary Initiatives Related to the ERC

Ms. Monteagudo explained that the City is currently going through the 2016 budgetary process. The final budget will be approved on November 3, 2015. There is an Equal Rights Specialist position in the proposed DOA budget that will be assigned to this commission in 2016. DOA Director Sharon Robinson will be the hiring manager and is working on a draft job description for the position. The Equal Rights Specialist position will be one of several positions added to the DOA budget to support equal rights and similar initiatives in the City. Commissioner Roman said that it's a big accomplishment and step forward to have a position dedicated to the ERC. Commissioner Roman said the ERC appreciates the work DER has done to support the ERC.

Ms. Monteagudo said the DER staff will assist in the transition. Commissioner Baylor asked about the status of the commissioner vacancies on the ERC. Commissioner Roman said he is working with Clifton Crump of the Mayor's Office on this issue; the Mayor's office will identify individuals to fill the vacancies on the ERC. Ms. Monteagudo suggested that the ERC schedule

one more meeting this year and invite someone from the DOA to attend to ensure a smooth transition.

3. Discussion relative to working with the Fire and Police Commission executive director on community relations and engagement initiatives.

Commissioner Roman welcomed new FPC Executive Director MaryNell Regan. Commissioner Roman said that over the past year, the ERC has talked about how to leverage its relationship with the FPC to increase community-wide understanding of its functions and to assist in bringing issues from the community to the attention FPC, recognizing the FPC's quasi-judicial role. Ms. Monteagudo stated that the ERC had developed a plan for collaboration with FPC staff and that plan was shared with the former chair, Sarah Morgan, last spring. Commissioner Morgan wanted to wait until a new Executive Director was appointed to staff the FPC prior to a discussion regarding opportunities for collaboration.

Ms. Regan provided a brief history of the FPC and discussed its original purpose, which was and remains to eliminate political cronyism in hiring and to provide an independent civilian oversight agency vis a vis the protected service departments. The FPC was established in 1885. The FPC selects the fire and police chiefs and approves all hiring and promotions within both departments. The FPC hears and decides on employee disciplinary issues and provides oversight and review for both departments. The governing statute is Wis. Stats. 62.50. As the Executive Director, Ms. Regan may serve as the independent auditor of both departments. The FPC also evaluates citizen complaints.

Ms. Regan said she is very open to collaborating with the ERC. Ms. Regan stated that, given the portion of Chapter 109 that charges the ERC with community educational and outreach, the ERC could vet some of the community issues for her as executive director and could provide education to the community on the functions of the FPC and the respective departments. Ms. Regan said she also envisioned receiving advisory reports from the ERC to determine what FPC issues may need to be explained further, either in an ERC meeting with a departmental speaker on the topic or as an issue about which the ERC could hold a listening or educational session in the community.

Ms. Regan explained that there is an emphasis in the MPD's training curriculum on addressing mental health issues, de-escalation and fair and impartial policing. Commissioner Baylor agreed that community members need to understand the role of the FPC, as there are many misperceptions as to its statutory role. Commissioner Baylor said that the FPC also needs to build trust within the community. Ms. Regan said that the ERC provides a structure for citizens to come and voice concerns. Ms. Regan elaborated that FPC meetings are business meetings, therefore the commission's ability to hold public hearings or listening sessions at their business meetings is limited, though the FPC can schedule separate public meetings on specific topics. Ms. Regan reiterated that the ERC provides an ideal forum for a civil discourse on issues of concern to the community; if the sole purpose of such sessions is to listen, then that is helpful as well.

Commissioner Baylor suggested that the ERC could go out into the community to have about four meetings per year as listening sessions. Ms. Regan said such an approach by the ERC would be very helpful to her and to her staff. Ms. Regan reiterated that the FPC is a quasi-judicial commission and the members have to protect their impartiality. Ms. Regan said that the FPC commissioners are very aware of their quasi-judicial role and the provisions of the open meeting law, which prohibit comment on specific issues unless they are on the agenda.

Ms. Regan has introduced an unfinished business portion of the meetings during which she provides specific responses to questions or concerns raised during public comment at the previous meeting.

Ms. Montegudo explained that the ERC's role in this regard can't overlap with the responsibilities of the FPC under Wis. Stat. 62.50, but the ERC can identify items for the executive director's attention. Commissioner Baylor stated that this is an important community relations piece. Commissioner Roman said that it is important to him to ensure this new structure is rolled out properly going into 2016, including how it is communicated to the public.

Ms. Montegudo suggested that Ms. Regan explain any proposed changes related to the way the FPC processes citizen complaints. Ms. Regan stated that the Research Committee is looking at the citizen complaint process and evaluating its current effectiveness and how it could be improved. Ms. Regan said that many complaints are not technically rule violations, rather a perception of treatment issue or questioning how a law was applied in a certain circumstance. Ms. Regan said that she just attended a conference that talked about providing multiple venues in which citizen oversight entities listen to citizens. She said that there are already many really good community outreach programs in MPD; the ERC can assist as another forum and in providing education.

Commissioner Baylor suggested that there may be an opportunity through a letter or a video for Ms. Regan to introduce herself and her approach to the community; this would build the human side of the commission. She said that the FPC can build a legacy on improved community relations.

Ms. Montegudo said that DER staff and Ms. Regan will work on a structural summary prior to next ERC meeting. Ms. Montegudo suggested that DER staff develop examples as to how this collaboration between the FPC executive director and the ERC would work (e.g. host four meetings offsite with specific agenda items). Commissioner Roman suggested that the ERC establish a calendar prior to the beginning of the year with all the significant community listening sessions listed. Ms. Montegudo suggested that a meeting be scheduled before the end of the year to summarize and finalize the structure of the relationship between the ERC and the FPC executive director.

4. **Announcements by Commissioners of upcoming community activities.** Commissioner Roman discussed the My Brother's Keeper activities citywide and indicated that a schedule of events can be found in two locations: the City's website: www.milwaukee.gov/bma and www.bmocmilwaukee.org. Commissioner Aldape mentioned that the Latino Family Expo is this weekend (10/23 and 10/24/15) at South Division High School and the schedule is generally 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.
5. **Confirm next meeting date and location.** Ms. Montegudo suggested that the ERC have a transitional meeting prior to the ERC being staffed by the DOA. The next ERC meeting is tentatively scheduled for November 18, 2015 at 3 p.m.
6. **Adjourn.** Adjournment moved by Commissioner Moua; seconded by Commissioner Ordonez. Unanimously adjourned at 4:35 p.m.