



City of Milwaukee

200 E. Wells Street
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
53202

Meeting Minutes

EQUAL RIGHTS COMMISSION

TONY SNELL, CHAIR

JACQUELINE COOK, VICE-CHAIR

Nathan Guequierre, Martha Collins, William Crowley, Jessica Boling, and Jamal Washington

Staffing: Ms. Nichole Smith (414)-286-8558

Wednesday, February 15, 2023

4:30 PM

Room 303, City Hall

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by City Clerk Jim Owczarski at 4:43 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Present 5 - Snell, Guequierre, Crowley, Boling and Cook

Excused 2 - Collins and Washington

3. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

City Clerk Jim Owczarski declared the nominations for the position of Chairperson open. Member Tony Snell was nominated for the Chairperson of the Equal Rights Commission. There were no further nominations entered for the position of Chair. There were no objections to Member Tony Snell's election to the Chair of the Equal Rights Commission. Hearing no objections, City Clerk Jim Owczarski declared Member Tony Snell as elected Chair of the Equal Rights Commission.

City Clerk Jim Owczarski declared the nominations for the position of Vice Chairperson open. Member Jacqueline Cook was nominated for the Vice Chairperson of the Equal Rights Commission. There were no further nominations entered for the position of Vice Chairperson. There were no objections to Member Jacqueline Cook's election to the Chairperson of the Equal Rights Commission. Hearing no objections, City Clerk Jim Owczarski declared Member Jacqueline Cook elected Chairperson of the Equal Rights Commission.

City Clerk's Jim Owczarski concluded his role in the Annual Meetings Elections and turned over the Chairperson seat to newly re-elected Chairperson Tony Snell.

Chair Tony Snell thanked Jim Owczarski and made note that February is Black History Month where we celebrate the contributions that Black Americans have made to our nation and communities. Chair Snell added that we honor Black culture which is interwoven through the fabric of American culture, and emphasized Black History is

American History every single day.

Present 5 - Snell, Guequierre, Crowley, Boling and Cook

Excused 2 - Collins and Washington

4. Approval of Previous Minutes

Due to an unexpected vacancy in the position of the Equal Rights Specialist, the resignation of the Chief Equity Officer and consequent retirement of the Director of Administration, the minutes of the previous Equal Rights Commission meeting were not submitted for review. A record search of these previous minutes was not found. Chair Snell requested for a motion to defer approval of those minutes to a later date. The motion was taken by Vice Chair Cook, seconded by Commissioner Nathan and approved by the Commission.

5. Committee Appointments

Chair Tony Snell noted the Equal Rights Commission had four vacant commissioner positions which the commission is working with the Mayor's Office to fill.

The standing Committees were identified as: Governance, Compliance and Outreach.

In the past Committee appointments were made by the Chair consulting with the Vice Chair and others. And then each standing Committee determined its Chairperson. Because the Equal Rights Commission is down to seven members, it is difficult to fill these Committees. It was agreed, to defer the filling of Standing Committees as these would also need to be staffed by the incumbent in the vacant Equal Rights Specialist position.

6. Review of Strategic Planning Action Items

In the past Committee appointments were made by the Chair consulting with the Vice Chair and others. And then each standing Committee determined its Chairperson.

Because the Equal Rights Commission is down to seven members, it is difficult to fill those committees. It was agreed, to defer the creation of Standing Committees as these would also need to be staffed by the incumbent in the vacant Equal Rights Specialist position.

In addition, the Equal Rights Commission is working on re-defining its focus, and would like to obtain related input on what the Mayor's and the Chief Equity Officer's respective visions of equity for the city and the role of the Equal Rights Commission.

A shorter one year plan was agreed upon to work as a committee of the whole on alternate months, in collectively focusing on three pertinent goals:

- (1) Review and Restructure The Equal Rights Commission's Complaint Processes & Procedures*
- (2) Recruiting Commissioners for The Four Vacant Commission Positions In A Timely Manner*
- (3) City Department/Division Reports to The Equal Rights Commission:*

Commission members tackled the first of these goals in this agenda item:

(1) REVIEW AND RESTRUCTURE THE EQUAL RIGHTS COMMISSION'S COMPLAINT PROCESSES & PROCEDURES.

Chair Snell noted a need to obtain a status update and timeline from the City Attorney's Office and the Legislative Reference Bureau on the related modification of Chapter 109 Legislation.

It was noted by Chair Snell, that the City Attorney's Office has reached out to the Equal Rights Commission for the Log of Complaints to meet the requirements of a federal grant regarding Title 6.

It is Chair Snell's understanding that the Equal Rights Commission cannot take any complaints at the present moment, and this needs to be clarified by the City Attorney's Office.

It was requested by Chair Snell, that a City Attorney be present at Equal Rights Commission meetings to provide guidance on what the commission can or cannot legally do.

It was also Chair Snell's understanding and concern that the Equal Rights Commission was unknowingly included in successfully submitted grant applications, for the purpose of taking complaints but cannot at the present moment be in a position to process those complaints, all of which are based on discrimination.

It was agreed that Commissioner Boling leads the coordination of this goal.

These observations were seconded by Vice Chair Cook, and favored by the commissioners present.

7. Commissioner Recruitment

RECRUITING COMMISSIONERS FOR THE FOUR VACANT COMMISSION POSITIONS IN A TIMELY MANNER.

Vice Chairperson Cook reported that Oscar Tovar from the Mayor's Office is fully supporting the recruitment effort.

It was agreed that the commission, led by Commissioner Nathan, finalize the review and approval of the flyer that was created by the Equal Rights Specialist prior to their leaving this position, in order to embark on a public information campaign with support from Council Members and Departmental networks.

It was agreed that candidates for commissioner positions should submit their applications on the City of Milwaukee's Equal Rights Commission Landing Page.

8. Committee Reports

CITY DEPARTMENT/DIVISION REPORTS TO THE EQUAL RIGHTS COMMISSION

Chair Snell noted that if a city department filed and reported with the Equal Rights Commission in the past year, they need not repeat it this year. Vice Chairperson Cook requested that departmental or divisional reports become engaging discussions on

what is going well, what isn't going well particularly on critical factors. Commissioner Nathan added critical factors would include items such as "what does equity mean in your department?"

It was agreed that the commission accepts only four reports in the coming year due to time and capacity limitations. Commissioner Gueguierre was tasked with reporting back on a recommendation of the four departments that would be requested to report.

9. Communication from the Office of Equity and Inclusion

INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW CHIEF EQUITY OFFICER (CEO)

CEO Bernadette introduced herself to the Commission and outlined briefly her leadership experience in government and nonprofit equity and inclusion efforts. CEO Bernadette outlined the operational and staffing deficits that she is remediating by turning challenges to opportunities. Bernadette therefore leveled expectations on what the Office of Equity and Inclusion can minimally do for the Equal Rights Commission in the interim, and asked for patience as the commission works collaboratively with the Office of Equity and Inclusion in resolving these capacity gaps.

FULL COMMISSION MEETINGS & STANDING PUBLIC WORK MEETINGS

Chair Snell noted that after the Annual Meeting, the Commission can go back to its regular cycle of Board Commissioner Meetings and start to notice the meetings to determine quorum, where the three goals identified in item number 5, will become standing items.

It was agreed that the March 15th meeting (now rescheduled to March 29th, 2023) be held as a Committee of the Whole Standing Meeting to tackle the three related goals. The commission informed the new Chief Equity Officer Bernadette, that Standing Equal Rights Commission Meetings are held in January, March, May, July, September, and November. It was also agreed that a monthly follow up non-public work meeting with the Chief Equity Officer is scheduled for the first Monday of every month with the Chair, Vice Chair and Standing Committee Chairs.

EQUAL RIGHTS SPECIALIST POSITION

The Commission requested that the Equal Rights Specialist position be dedicated as a 100% full time equivalent, to adequately meet the broader standing committee tasks and in the immediate year, be available to respond to the three goals outlined in agenda item 5.

CEO Bernadette informed the Commission that they are not involved in the recruitment and selection process of the Equal Rights Position. However, she will seek guidance from the City Department of Employee Relations on whether some members of the Commission can be selected to sit on the interviewing panel – should that opportunity arise in lieu of Spring Election outcomes.

The incumbent in this position is on a leave of absence status, (with no communication with the Office of Equity and Inclusion), pending 2023 Spring elections. Should the incumbent win it will conservatively take any where from three to four months to fill this position. In the interim CEO Bernadette suggested the Administrative Specialist from the Office of Equity and Inclusion acts as a stand-in to staff the Standing and full Board Commission meetings.

10. Adjournment

Having no other business Chair Snell requested for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:48 pm, which was made by Vice Chair Cook, seconded by Commissioner Nathan and favored by all commissioners present.