



MINUTES

BOARD OF EQUAL RIGHTS COMMISSIONERS

May 22, 2019 at 4:00pm

Room 301-A, City Hall, 200 E. Wells Street Milwaukee, WI 53202

Present:

Commissioner Chez Ordonez, Acting Chair

Commissioner Mayhoua Moua

Commissioner Tony Snell

Commissioner Reggie Jackson

Commissioner Martha Collins

Commissioner Nathan Guequierre

Jessica Langill, Dept. of Administration

Rebecca Rabatin, ADA Coordinator, Dept. of Administration

Patricia Ruiz-Cantu, Dept. of Administration

Ben Roovers, City Attorney's Office

6 community members

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:05 p.m. by Commissioner Ordonez. Quorum met.

2. Roll Call

Present at roll call:

Commissioner Chez Ordonez, Acting Chair

Commissioner Tony Snell

Commissioner Martha Collins

Commissioner Reggie Jackson

Commissioner Nathan Guequierre

Commissioner Mayhoua Moua arrived after roll call

3. Approval of Minutes from April 2019 Meeting

No objections. Minutes approved.

4. Committee Updates

Commissioner Snell stated the Events Committee is working on the 75th Anniversary and Human Rights Day Event. He stated the committee is working to confirm a venue for the Human Rights Day Event. The ERC will be partnering with the Milwaukee County Human Rights Commission and the United Nations Association. The Committee is still working to confirm a date for the 75th Anniversary event. There will also be a video prepared to highlight the ERC history and what is to come. He stated the committee will need help from all Commissioners with pulling off both events. Commissioner Snell stated there will not be many expenditures for either event as the committee is hoping to find donations and community partners. The committee will also take advantage of city resources.

Commissioner Guequierre stated the Inclusive Restroom Committee has been assembled and the first meeting date has been set. The committee is made up of 4 representatives from the City, 2 community representatives, and 1 representative from UWM. He stated he has laid out a plan of attack to address single stall restrooms, multi-stall restrooms, and city-wide policy recommendation.

5. The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

Commissioner Ordonez stated the Legislative Reference Bureau prepared a peer city gender analysis report for the ERC. Commissioner Collins stated she made a motion a couple meetings ago to pass a CEDAW resolution through the ERC. She also stated that Madison recently passed a CEDAW resolution. Commissioner Collins stated that several women's organizations have been fighting for decades to get a resolution passed.

Public testimony: Mary Lahn from Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (support) asked if there would be any ramifications to a resolution. Commissioner Ordonez explained that a resolution is just a declaration that the ERC will work with the city to affirm the issue. He also explained that the ERC could encourage the Common Council to issue their own resolution or ordinance to protect women. Commissioner Snell stated that the community members should also work with the ERC after the resolution is passed to come up with a strategic plan on how to move forward. He suggested they find personal stories from people that have been impacted to educate the public. He also encouraged that the group find a sponsor on the Common Council for a CEDAW resolution or ordinance.

Babette Bruno from Peace Action (support) stated she had worked a lot in Central America and Cuba and has seen a great deal of discrimination against women, but also strong women leaders. She stated that the women in Milwaukee face a lot of the same problems. She encouraged the ERC to adopt the resolution and asked for help to flesh it out to have it ready to

take to the Common Council. Commissioner Snell stated the group should do their homework before meeting with members of the Common Council as they have high expectations.

Ben Roovers stated the resolution is within the purview of the ERC and there were no legal barriers. Ben Roovers suggested that the ERC hold the affirmation of the resolution since there was not an official notice of the resolution available to the public within 48 hours. He advised that voting on it today would be a potential violation. Additional edits were discussed. Commissioner Guequierre suggested that more specific actions (ordinance, gender study, etc.) be added to the resolution to encourage the Common Council to act.

Commissioner Collins stated she would take the resolution back to the group and use the upcoming month to write a strong resolution and make some initial contact with Common Council representatives. Commissioner Ordonez stated after the resolution is passed, the ERC can help push the recommendation to the Common Council and Mayor's Office. Resolution held until next ERC meeting. Commissioner Collins also suggested this resolution also be discussed among committees once committees become official.

6. Racism as a Public Health Crisis

Commissioner Ordonez stated an LRB study regarding racism as a public health crisis has been made available. He shared that he was invited to attend a meeting with Common Council President Hamilton to discuss this issue, including the recent passage of a resolution by the County of Milwaukee. He stated it is important for the City to also pass a resolution regarding this issue, if it also comes with policy change and an action plan.

Commissioner Jackson stated the resolution was strongly worded and well-written. He stated that we are finally in a place nationally where we can have this conversation out loud. He shared that it is important to first address the history of how we got to where we are and how the history impacts certain communities. Claiming this as a public health crisis will allow us to take a real look at our national history and inform the nation about the impact. He discussed the systemic effort to change the mindset of Americans about smoking, which used the public health crisis model. Commissioner Jackson stated it was also important to create measurable and attainable goals following the resolution. He said this is a good first-step for the City of Milwaukee.

Commissioner Snell asked what specific role the ERC could play without trying to bite off too much. Commissioner Jackson stated it is important to promote the idea, educate the public, and build collaboration city and county-wide. He also stated that the City passing a resolution builds momentum and helps normalize the work, as well as put pressure on communities that have not yet followed suit. Commissioner Ordonez stated that building community alliances has been a key part in the initial discussions with President Hamilton. He stated there needs to be a way to measure outcomes and have some teeth that will allow the ERC to work with other city departments to collaborate. Commissioner Jackson suggested that the City look into incorporating the work GARE has been doing as well.

Commissioner stated that once a follow-up conversation with President Hamilton is had, that community voices will be included in writing the resolution. He stated it is essential that all communities are represented in the resolution. Commissioner Snell asked if the ERC find funding for the ERC Commissioners and staff to be trained and educated on this issue. Marcus from the Office of African American Affairs stated there is a City and County Milwaukee GARE learning community that has already been discussing these issues. He stated MPD, MFD, and the city health department are all members and would be good partners in this effort. Commissioner Ordonez agreed it is essential to find partners both within City departments and across the Milwaukee community.

Commissioner Snell stated we are going to have to dig deep to change the culture and mindset of the nation about racism. Commissioner Jackson stated that the City of Milwaukee must start by taking a hard look at itself to see what role it has played and continues to play in perpetuating racism and inequity. Commissioner Jackson brought up the recent assessment of houses within certain neighborhoods and geographical areas. He stated unfair taxing processes bring about displacement and gentrification. Commissioner Ordonez suggested that the City Assessors Office be called to report to the ERC within the near future. He stated outside community groups and residents could be invited to offer countering testimony. Commissioner Jackson stated that there has been a lack of transparency that needs to be addressed and that there have been questions from community members about credentials of assessors. Commissioner Ordonez stated closed executive session is also an option to maintain personnel privacy if necessary. He asked Commissioner Jackson to bring forward a plan or list of questions that should be asked to the City Assessor's Office regarding this issue.

7. Strategic Plan Discussion

Commissioner Ordonez stated he recently had a phone call with Sharon Robinson to discuss an update on the strategic plan. He stated that while Denise Patton's contract has been extended to help with community engagement, it is essential that a written plan be completed within the near future. He stated some type of strategic plan framework will be available by the end of July. He stated committees will become officially active after the strategic plan has been complete.

8. Community Dialogue & Upcoming Events

None

9. Next Meeting Date: Wednesday, June 19th 2019

10. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 6:02pm

jml