



MINUTES

BOARD OF EQUAL RIGHTS COMMISSIONERS

September 25, 2019 at 3:00pm

Room 303, City Hall, 200 E. Wells Street Milwaukee, WI 53202

Present:

Commissioner Chez Ordonez, Acting Chair
Commissioner Mayhoua Moua
Commissioner Tony Snell
Commissioner Nathan Guequierre
Commissioner Jennifer Bennett

Sharon Robinson, Dept. of Administration
Jessica Langill, Dept. of Administration
Ben Roovers, City Attorney's Office
Shelley Gregory, FORGE
Elle Halo, Public Allies
Denise Patton, BDP & Associates

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 3:06 p.m. by Commissioner Ordonez. Quorum met.

2. Roll Call

Present at roll call:

Commissioner Chez Ordonez, Acting Chair
Commissioner Mayhoua Moua
Commissioner Tony Snell
Commissioner Nathan Guequierre

Commissioner Jennifer Bennett arrived after roll call

3. Approval of Minutes from July 2019 Meeting

No objections. Minutes approved.

4. Committee Updates

Commissioner Snell stated that the Human Rights Day is scheduled for December 14th. Rebecca Rabatin shared that the subcommittee had chosen a location but had to find a new location because of accessibility issues. The subcommittee is looking into Ambassador Inn as a replacement location. Commissioner Snell stated that the Equality Awards nomination request needs to be pushed out by Commissioners.

Commissioner Guequierre stated that the Inclusive Restrooms Working Group will be reconvened in October to discuss their future work and education and outreach.

5. ERC 75th Anniversary Update

Commissioner Snell stated that the 75th Anniversary would be celebrated at City Hall on October 9th. He shared that a celebration video is being prepared. Commissioner Moua requested that an invite be re-sent to the Commissioners. Commissioner Snell stated that Visit Milwaukee will be issuing a press release.

6. Racism as a Public Health Crisis

Commissioner Ordonez stated that Common Council passed a resolution that directly effects the ERC. He shared the resolution aligns with the ERC mission and vision. The ERC has specific duties outlined in the resolution including using Chapter 109-11 authority to request department reports on any criteria that has to do with equal rights. He stated the ERC needs to start coming up with questions/criteria to request from City departments. He shared that these reports can begin being collected in the beginning of 2020. This responsibility will be tasked to the Communications and Compliance & Enforcement committees.

7. Inclusive Restrooms

Commissioner Guequierre stated that a working group tasked with bringing inclusive restrooms to City buildings was created in July. He stated that he would like to submit a resolution from the working group for consideration. The resolution outlines the commitment of the ERC to creating restrooms that all people feel comfortable using and requesting action from the Mayor's office to direct City departments to make this happen.

Commissioner Guequierre stated that the workgroup looked at converting single-stall and multi-user restrooms, beginning with simply changing signage on single-stall restrooms. The two asks in the resolution include asking for direction from the Mayor's Office to begin working

on this issue with departments. The second ask would be to request Common Council to move this city-wide.

Ben Roovers stated that the fifth WHEREAS clause stating “whether perceived or actual” does not appear in Chapter 109. He stated the only place the Ordinance discusses “perceived or actual” identity is referring to disability. He recommended that the phrase be taken out of the resolution to be sure that it is in alignment with Chapter 109. Commissioner Snell stated that 105-5.12 states “protected person means any individual person intended to be protected...this includes an individual’s sex...or any individual’s affiliation or perceived affiliation with any of these categories.”

Shelley Gregory stated the working group felt strongly about the inclusion of perceived identities. Commissioner Guequierre suggested that the resolution be changed to echo the language of Chapter 109 by taking out the clause in the fifth WHEREAS clause but adding “or affiliation with any of these categories” to the end of the list of protected classes. Commissioner Ordonez added that people are discriminated against based on perception about gender identity all the time and suggested that an amendment to Chapter 109 may be necessary. Gregory agreed that the resolution should be written to echo the current Chapter 109 ordinance but that the ERC should go back to the ordinance to strengthen areas that may not be clear.

Commissioner Guequierre moved to adopt the resolution as amended, Commissioner Snell seconded. No objections. Resolution as amended approved.

Commissioner Ordonez stated the resolution will be sent to the Mayor with a letter explaining the request. Next month, the ERC should look to writing pursuing a resolution with the Common Council. Gregory brought up legislation regarding multi-user restrooms that is being considered at the state level. They stated that the authors of the legislation have requested that Milwaukee does not provide vocal support to the legislation in hopes that it will pass without attention drawn to it.

8. Indigenous People’s Day

Commissioner Ordonez stated the ERC presenting a resolution on Indigenous People’s Day can be used as an advisory to the Mayor and Common Council in hopes that it will be made city-wide. He stated the City Clerk has looked at the resolution draft and that it echoes the many other municipalities who have passed similar legislation. Commissioner Bennett stressed the importance of listing the names of the people indigenous to Milwaukee in their native language. She also shared that the City does not celebrate Columbus Day, so it does not need to be renamed but simply declared as Indigenous People’s Day.

Commissioner Bennett moved to adopt the resolution declaring the 2nd Monday in October as Indigenous People’s Day in the City of Milwaukee, Commissioner Moua seconded. No objections. Resolution approved.

Commissioner Ordonez stated the ERC will find an author at the Common Council level to make Indigenous People's Day declared City-wide.

9. Community Dialogue & Upcoming Events

Rebecca Rabatin stated the Deaf Story Jam last weekend was a great event. She stated a common theme was discrimination in employment. Elle Halo stated there is a transgender community meeting coming up at Diverse & Resilient on October 23rd. Halo also requested that a trans flag be raised at the City for Transgender Day of Visibility in March. Gregory shared that FORGE will be planning an event for Transgender Day of Remembrance on November 20th. Commissioner Bennett shared that Columbus Park will be re-named Indigenous People's Park at a ceremony on Monday, October 14th. On Thursday October 10th the American Indian Science and Engineering society will be holding a conference in Milwaukee.

10. City Email Addresses for Commissioners

Commissioner Ordonez stated it is important to have a city email address in order to make sure that any discrimination complaints that come through personal email are not missed. He stated Commissioners can opt in for a city email address if wanted. He stated procedures and protocol will be provided to those who opt in. Sharon Robinson stated that Commissioners need to be careful when communicating with personal acquaintances about discrimination complaints. She recommended that all discrimination complaints be forwarded to the Equal Rights Specialist.

11. Strategic Planning

Ben Roovers stated it was very important to discuss the policy and procedures manual for receiving discrimination complaints. He shared that the manual is written in a very legal manner, but that this is necessary to protect the ERC when future discrimination decisions are made. This manual will outline due process and the process for processing a complaint. He stated that it is helpful for the ERC to combine the manual with an easy to understand one-pager and to stay in contact with the parties to help them understand the steps of the process. Commissioner Ordonez also asked for a graphic of the process. Ben Roovers stated additional materials can be taken care of easily, but that the manual needs to be approved soon to have a process set up. He stated that the manual is based almost entirely from Madison's manual.

Commissioner Snell asked that the manual also be translated to other languages. Commissioner Ordonez brought up the need for a case management tracker to keep track of response and action dates required by the ordinance and manual. Ben Roovers recommended that the ERC look back at dates listed in the ordinance and think about expanding the timeline to make a proper discovery process more possible. Rebecca Rabatin asked that an expanded timeline for an ADA complaint be amended as well. Ben Roovers asked that everyone take some time to go through the manual and send any changes before the next ERC meeting.

Denise Patton stated that it was important to go over the 2019 priorities. Commission agreed that Commissioners would remain in their current strategic planning workgroups and that final

committee assignments would be decided on in 2020. She shared it was important for workgroups to assign deadlines for priority tasks before the end of 2019. Commissioner Guequeirre stated that he feels comfortable that the communications committee will be able to complete all priority tasks before the end of 2019. Jessica Langill suggested that each committee schedule some time soon to go through the 2019 priorities and assign deadlines to each task.

Commissioner Guequeirre offered to also sit on the governance workgroup in 2019 to help push that work forward. He also stated that the ERC roll out the new mission statement and priority areas at the 75th Anniversary event.

Commissioners agreed that the Commission size should be expanded to 11. Sharon stated the file to Common Council to amend the ordinance to increase Commission size should be timed to go along with the annual report to the CC. Sharon stated she will follow up with the Common Council to amend the ordinance and provide an update by the end of 2019. Commissioner Ordonez stated the ERC should look at also adding immigrant protections and amending other language in the ordinance at the same time.

Commissioner Snell stated the importance of Commissioners showing up for meetings and doing the work. He said the Governance committee will need to put together a handbook that outlines the responsibilities of being a Commissioner. Sharon Robinson suggested that the ERC only have 4 yearly full Commission meetings, and that committees meet monthly or bi-monthly when there is not a full Commission meeting.

12. Next Meeting Date: Wednesday, October 16th 2019

13. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 5:25pm

jml