

**WASHINGTON STATE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 24, 2019 AT 9:30AM
VIA TELEPHONE CONFERENCE**

ATTENDANCE

Commissioners: Charlene Strong, Skylee Sahlstrom, and Deborah Cook.

Staff: Sharon Ortiz, Executive Director; Cheryl Strobert, Deputy Director; Sharon James, Assistant Attorney General; Deborah Gonzales, Commission Clerk.

OPENING AND WELCOME

Chair Strong chaired the meeting and called the meeting to order at 9:30 AM.

MEETING MINUTES:

The November 29, 2018 and December 27, 2018 Minutes were approved. Commissioner Sahlstrom motioned to approve the minutes. Commissioner Cook seconded the motion.

CASE CLOSURES

There were no corrections or changes made to the submitted closures. No cases were pulled.

Commissioner Sahlstrom made a motion to approve the remaining cases for closure; Commissioner Cook seconded the motion and the motion was carried.

EXECUTIVE REPORT

Executive Director Ortiz discussed the governor's budget including a database since the last project was stopped due to underbidding. The agency was also allotted funds for an administrative services manager. Legislature still has to place this funding on their budget.

The federal government shutdown affected the Human Rights Commission (HRC) due to the contracts with both the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the U.S. Housing & Urban Development (HUD). The agency has been accepting complaints on behalf of EEOC in order to preserve the complainant's statute of limitations. The EEOC had very limited staff during the shutdown. HUD was completely shut down, and their recorded phone message was directing callers to the King County Office of Civil Rights and they no longer investigate fair housing complaints. The HRC receives referrals from HUD so during the shutdown, the agency did not receive any.

The sexual harassment policies are complete and have been posted on the agency's website and the Washington State Labor & Industries' website. Policy Analyst Laura Lindstrand testified at the Fair Labor & Workplace Standards Committee about the policies.

Two new bills were introduced that directly affect Senate Bill 4960. Senate Bill 5165 adds immigration and citizenship status as a protected class. Most of us believe that it is already covered under national origin. Senate Bill 5258 is regarding sexual harassment of isolated workers. It mirrors the ordinance in Seattle, and it has different criteria for filing. For instance, an employer only needs to have one employee whereas under our law, the employer must have at least eight employees. It also left out agricultural workers. It is limited to employers that send out employees in groups of two or less to work, which could be problematic. The bill does not provide clear guidance on how it is to be enforced.

Idolina Reta has retired after serving over 40 years in the agency. Recruitment is ongoing for investigators and customer service. There is a new hire for a Civil Rights Investigator 1 that will begin on February 5, 2019. Promotions are being given and the agency is taking the opportunity to monitor the workflow and make improvements.

The HRC website has a new page regarding hate crimes in housing. It contains resources and information of what to do. It was created in partnership with the Fair Housing Center of Western Washington.

COMMISSIONER UPDATES

Commissioner Cook was notified of her confirmation hearing being scheduled for February 12, 2019. There were some plans to move forward on some of the preliminary activities, fact-finding and educational activities around the prescription drug issue. However, with the passing of Toby Olsen, there is a greater need to regroup.

AAG UPDATES:

The Civil Rights Unit filed an amended complaint before the Office of Administrative Hearing in the case of Harmon v Thomas in November. There was a pre-hearing conference on December 27, 2018, and the administrative hearing is currently scheduled for July 8, 2019.

2019 COMMISSION MEETING SCHEDULE

February 28, 2019:	Olympia, WA
March 28, 2019:	Via Conference Call
April 25, 2019:	Walla Walla, WA
May 23, 2019:	Seattle, WA
June 27, 2019:	Via Conference Call

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:00 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Deborah Gonzales