

**WASHINGTON STATE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
JUNE 25, 2020 AT 9:30AM
CONFERENCE CALL**

ATTENDANCE

Commissioners: Deborah Cook, Skylee Sahlstrom, Guadalupe Gamboa and David Hackney.

Staff: Sharon Ortiz, Executive Director; Cheryl Strobert, Deputy Director; Matt Kernutt, Assistant Attorney General; Laura Lindstrand, Policy, Policy Analyst; Jerry Lee, Operations Manager; Ana Sepulveda, Customer Service Specialist 2; and Deborah Gonzales, Commission Clerk.

OPENING AND WELCOME

Chair Cook chaired the meeting and called the meeting to order at 9:31A.M.

MEETING MINUTES

The following minutes were approved:

1. January 23, 2020
2. February 27, 2020
3. April 23, 2020
4. May 4, 2020
5. May 28, 2020

Commissioner Hackney motioned to approve the minutes. Commissioner Sahlstrom seconded the motion.

CASE CLOSURES

The following cases were pulled prior to the meeting for additional review:

1. Bowman, Richard v. WA ST Dept of Enterprise Services
2. Caudill, Darrick v. Providence Home Health Services
3. Gontinas, Jason v. Lockheed Martin Space Systems
4. McKoy, Alexandria v. Girl Scouts of Western Washington
5. Poorman, Cheri v. Tri City Orthopedics

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

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

There are various important matters that are changing daily in Washington State. Beginning with the protests that are occurring regarding Civil Rights. The protests have a stronger impact now as the whole world is involved and are actively joining in. Another being that COVID-19 is still affecting the state. It was discovered that small cards being distributed via the internet that purport to exempt people from wearing a mask due to their disability. This is concerning as

wearing a mask may be vital in protecting others by preventing of the illness from spreading. The Governor has put in place protections for people with disabilities and mask wearing.

The budget crisis, however, is what is foremost on our minds. The agency begins taking furloughs every week until July 25th. The agency is also required to cut the budget by 15% in addition to the furloughs, or else it would leave us to resort to lay-offs. The agency is at a breaking point with having a backlog of over 250 cases, and unable to fill vacancies due to the hiring freeze.

Chair inquired as to how long from the time of filing will a complaint be assigned to an investigator. Executive Director Ortiz responded that it would take no sooner than six months for a complaint to undergo an investigation.

Commissioner Hackney suggested that perhaps an argument should be made that in light of the unrest, the work the agency is essential. With respect to the pandemic, worker advocacy groups are considered essential workers, and with respect to budget cuts.

Commissioner Gamboa stated that the pandemic and protests of racial inequity had really affected change in everything. While the governor is currently speaking out against racial inequity, this is the time to press for some change. People can't afford to wait for six months to have their cases to be assigned.

Executive Director Ortiz, Deputy Director Strobert, and Diann Lewallen are to attend a meeting with the Governor's Office to address these concerns. An update will be provided to the Commissioners, and decide if additional discussion is needed.

BLACK LIVES MATTER PROCLAMATION

Executive Director Ortiz stated that the Commissioner Hackney would draft the proclamation, and Commissioners would review and sign in support of the Black Lives Matter Movement.

The proclamation will be circulated prior to the next commission meeting in July. A special meeting may be needed for more open discussion.

INDIVIDUAL OUTREACH (VIRTUAL)

Executive Director Ortiz wanted to remind Commissioners that public meetings are still prohibited, and all meetings should be virtual or over the phone.

RECONSIDERATIONS

Executive Director Ortiz wanted to remind Commissioners to reserve additional time for future commission meetings to allow ample time in review of requests for reconsiderations.

COMMISSIONER REPORTING

Chair Cook will be doing an online presentation for a symposium on the 30th anniversary of the ADA on July 27th. It was organized by the Governor's Committee on Disability Issues on Employment and others.

While completing the financial disclosure material, as required by the state, Chair Cook discovered a major accessibility flaw, which would result in someone not being able to complete the form at all. The cause of the problem was that no one had ever tested the site. Chair Cook contacted the Financial Disclosure Commission and they are planning on redesigning the site for accessibility purposes, and invited Chair Cook to participate in this process.

Commissioner Gamboa expressed concerns about the situation in Yakima Valley. The positive rate of COVID-19 testing is near 30% while in other counties the rate is around 6%. A couple of months ago, the unions sued the State to come up with enforceable regulations and enforcement, but the State took it as another labor regulation. Mandatory regulations were only recently created last week for labor protections.

Commissioner Gamboa also attended a meeting for a coalition for farmworker women, and they asked that he draft a letter to raise public awareness, and to place pressure on the State to act now. He was one of several authors in this letter, which focused on the death of a farmworker who was 60 years old and had died at the end of May. The farmworker had tested positive for COVID-19 and tried to self-isolate, but he didn't get better, and even some of his family members became sick. The letter was sent to the Seattle Times for publishing, and is pending confirmation if publication will follow. The letter suggests that there be funding for community outreach by the locals, and for L&I to go out to speak with employers to know about the enforcement rules. Commissioner Hackney offered additional assistance in this matter.

2020 COMMISSION MEETING SCHEDULE

July 23, 2020 at 9:30AM:	Via Conference Call
August 27, 2020 at 9:30AM:	Via Conference Call
September 24, 2020 at 9:30AM:	Via Conference Call
October 22, 2020 at 9:30AM:	Via Conference Call
November 2020:	TBD
December 2020:	TBD

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:35A.M.

Respectfully submitted by,
Deborah Gonzales