

**WASHINGTON STATE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
APRIL 22, 2021 AT 9:30AM
CONFERENCE CALL**

ATTENDANCE

Commissioners: Deborah Cook, James Mohr, and Jeff Sbaih.

Staff: Sharon Ortiz, Executive Director; Cheryl Strobert, Deputy Director; Sharon James, Assistant Attorney General; Jerry Lee, Operations Manager; Selene Garcia, Customer Service Specialist 2; and Deborah Gonzales, Commission Clerk.

OPENING AND WELCOME

Chair Cook chaired the meeting and called the meeting to order at 9:33A.M.

MEETING MINUTES

The March 25, 2021 Minutes were reviewed and approved.

Commissioner Mohr motioned to approve the minutes. Commissioner Sbaih seconded the motion.

CASE CLOSURES

No cases were pulled this month.

Commissioner Mohr motioned to approve the cases for closure. Commissioner Sbaih seconded the motion and the motion was carried.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORTING

The agency's office locations remain closed to the public, and are awaiting updates or guidance from the Governor's Office. State agencies are expecting to receive news by the end of June 2021.

Senate Bill 5027, concerning closed captioning on televisions in places of public accommodation, passed both the Senate and House Committee. The bill is expected to be signed by the Governor and will fall under the agency's jurisdiction.

Senate Bill 5313 is concerning health insurance discrimination. The bill requires insurance plans to cover gender affirming treatment and is also pending signature. Director Ortiz met with the Office of the Insurance Commission to discuss which agency would be better suited to enforce this law. It was agreed that the Insurance Commission would handle enforcement due to their expertise and ability to impose fines on companies violating this law.

Equity bills will also be sent to the Governor's Office for signature. This includes a bill banning the use of Native American names, images, and symbols as logos and mascots.

The agency has hired a new temporary housing investigator to help manage the growing caseload of housing complaints. There have been many cases submitted to the Civil Rights Unit with the Attorney General's Office for review. A list was provided previously to the Commissioners of which cases were approved and forwarded for conciliation.

A grant with the Northwest Fair Housing Alliance was recently completed. It involved the creation of new housing brochures and conducting testing.

In other partnership activities, the agency has also paired with the Fair Housing Center of Washington (FHCW) in Tacoma who were performing 20 rental based housing tests based on national origin. Through a contract with the FHCW, they updated the housing section of the agency's website to create a training webinar.

Civil Rights Specialist Juanita San Soto has been attending the Basta Coalition virtual meetings. This Coalition's mission is to eliminate sexual harassment against farmworkers. They created informational training kits for both farmworkers and the employers to utilize.

Director Ortiz also met with Labor & Industries (L&I) to improve services for the agricultural unit. There were discussions of how to handle complaints if they find discrimination in the workplace. L&I is holding community meetings to improve their services and Director Ortiz is planning on attending to provide input and answer questions.

Interviews were recently held for a Data Consultant position. This position will compile statistical data needed in order to track trends and monitor work production. A selection is expected to be made soon.

ANTI-HATE RESOLUTION

Commissioner Mohr drafted a Resolution for Standing in Solidarity with Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. It was distributed to all Commissioners and no recommendations for edits were made.

Commissioner Sbaih motioned to adopt the Resolution. Commissioner Mohr seconded the motion.

The Resolution will be signed and posted to the agency's website.

PARTNERING WITH NOT IN OUR TOWN FOR A SPOKANE MEETING

Commissioner Mohr and Director Ortiz met with Patrice O'Neill, founder and Director of Not in Our Town, and discussed upcoming opportunities to work together in future projects. The

agency had previously collaborated with the organization a few years ago in Everett which turned out to be successful.

COMMISSIONER REPORTING

Chair Cook wanted to plan future discussions for potentially having an in-person commission meeting. She also wanted to discuss plans for the recruitment of the agency’s Executive Director Position as Director Ortiz is set to retire early next year.

2021 COMMISSION MEETING SCHEDULE

May 27, 2021: Via Conference Call
June 24, 2021: Via Conference Call
July 22, 2021: Via Conference Call
August 26, 2021: Via Conference Call
September 23, 2021 Via Conference Call

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:07A.M.

Respectfully submitted by,
Deborah Gonzales

