

**WASHINGTON STATE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION  
COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES  
SEPTEMBER 23, 2021 AT 9:30AM  
CONFERENCE CALL**

**ATTENDANCE**

**Commissioners:** Deborah Cook, Guadalupe Gamboa, Jeff Sbaih, and James Mohr.

**Staff:** Executive Director; Cheryl Strobert, Deputy Director; Sharon James, Assistant Attorney General; Jerry Lee, Operations Manager; Quinn Snow, Customer Service Specialist 2; and Selene Garcia, Customer Service Specialist 2

**OPENING AND WELCOME**

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

**MEETING MINUTES**

The August 26, 2021 Minutes were reviewed and approved.

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

**CASE CLOSURES**

The following case was pulled prior to the meeting:

Vargas, Beatriz v. Chelan Fruit

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

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORTING**

Executive Director Ortiz stated that the agency has been working to meet contractual obligations between the agency and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and has done so successfully. In addition, she has been working on enforcement issues and developing ways of handling the increasing number of complaints relating to the Governor's Vaccine Mandate. The agency is currently tracking the number of complaints received and will put together an analysis to better illustrate those numbers. The high volume of complaints is partially due to people making the assumption that the agency is responsible for reviewing the exemptions for the vaccine mandate.

Director Ortiz stated that at the current time the agency will not be accepting complaints that fall under the Governor's Vaccine Mandate.

The agency continues to have a backlog of housing cases and non-housing cases. A temporary investigator has been hired to work the cases of another investigator who recently moved to another agency. Recruitments will be open for the Spokane, Olympia, and Yakima offices. Decision packages were submitted this month, and we asked for four investigators, two managers, and retirement buyouts.

Complaints have been received regarding the agency backlog of cases. The agency's budget continues to get cut and this has contributed to the snowball effect of an increasing backlog. Currently the agency has almost 800 pending cases and is working on strategies to minimize the backlog prior to the arrival of the new executive director.

### **RECRUITMENT FOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Chair Cook and Director Ortiz have been working with the Department of Enterprise Services (DES) to begin the recruitment process for the new executive director and it should be posted soon. Chair Cook anticipates a workgroup for the hiring process that would include Commissioner Mohr.

### **COMMISSIONER REPORTING**

Commissioner Cook has been working with the Washington Council of the Blind and other disability advocacy groups regarding accessible prescription labeling as part of the requirements of RCW 49.60.

Commissioner Gamboa spoke with Blanca Rodriguez from Columbia Legal Services and he will be giving a presentation on farmworkers rights and protections.

### **2021 COMMISSION MEETING SCHEDULE**

October 28, 2021: Via Conference Call (Time changed from 09:30am to 08:00am)

November 18 2021: Via Conference Call

December 16 2021: Via Conference Call

### **ADJOURN**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:01 A.M.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Selene Garcia