

**WASHINGTON STATE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
APRIL 28, 2022 9:30AM
CONFERENCE CALL**

ATTENDANCE

Commissioners: Deborah Cook, Guadalupe Gamboa, and James Mohr.

Staff: Cheryl Strobert, Interim Executive Director; Kristin Lamson, Assistant Attorney General; Selene Garcia, Customer Service Specialist 2; and Deborah Gonzales, Commission Clerk.

Public: Marguerite Richard, Alex Tsimerman, Michael Fuller, Caroline Nelson, and Bonny Yourzack

OPENING AND WELCOME

Chair Cook chaired the meeting and called the meeting to order at 9:30A.M.

MEETING MINUTES

The March 24, 2022 Meeting Minutes were reviewed and approved.

Commissioner Gamboa motioned to approve the minutes. Commissioner Mohr seconded the motion, and the motion was carried.

CASE CLOSURES

The following cases were pulled prior to the meeting:

Baisch, Carrie v. Seattle Children's Hospital
Nobles, Sane v. Sno-Isle Regional Libraries

Corrections were made for the following cases, but were not pulled from the agenda:

Heinen, Kaitlin v. AMPACC Law Group, PLLC
Merkley, Maria v. Fibre Federal Credit Union
Mogan, Deanna v. Catholic Charities of Spokane

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

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Interim Director Strobert provided a brief update on the agency's budget and recruitments. The agency obtained funding for six additional staff members and is planning on recruiting for an intake supervisor. The agency is also looking at filling an administrative position that was

previously vacant and are working with the Department of Enterprise Services (DES) HR to begin the recruitment process.

The agency is currently undergoing a routine audit through the State's Auditor's Office. Staff are meeting periodically with the auditor and providing the requested information. An exit meeting is currently scheduled for the end of May 2022, and the agency will be advised of any potential deficiencies.

An All-Staff is currently scheduled on May 12, 2022 to provide staff with updates and to discuss gradually returning to the office. The goal is to have staff begin returning to the office an additional day by June 13, 2022. There will also be discussion on the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Plan and the creation of the agency's DEI Committee. Gender discrimination training will also be provided for all staff.

Progress on case closures under the federal contracts with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the U.S. Housing & Urban Development (HUD) was provided.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Chair Cook provided updates on the recruitment for the agency's Executive Director. The recruitment was extended previously and is closed. The agency solicited an external recruiter for marketing assistance as no new applicants were received.

Chair Cook recommended that Commissioners go into Executive Session to review and discuss applicants that had previously applied. Chair Cook has also extended Interim Director Strobert's temporary appointment until the end of June 2022.

AAG UPDATE

HRC v Gomez-Lopez is a housing discrimination case filed initially in Yakima County in January of 2020 following the reasonable cause finding by the Commission, and the Complainant elected to file in superior court. The alleged discrimination was refusal to rent to the Complainant, her minor children, and the children's grandmother because the landlord did not believe the unit was suitable for young children. Through mediation efforts, the Attorney General's Office' Civil Rights Unit was able to resolve the matter with a consent decree including all of the injunctive terms.

Olympus Spa v Ortiz is a federal court lawsuit alleging the Commission's investigation of alleged gender identity discrimination violates the first amendment rights of the business, its owners, and employees. The Civil Rights Unit will move to dismiss for jurisdictional reasons including that there is no live controversy for the Court to adjudicate given that the Spa entered into a voluntary settlement agreement to resolve the Commission's investigation. They will also defend the constitutionality of the Washing State Law Against Discrimination and its implementing regulations on the merits.

House Bill 1329 recently passed in the last legislative session that contained several updates to the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA). Remote access to public meetings was at the forefront of these updates to improve public participation and access to the government business.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Caroline Nelson gave a brief description of their limitations and assistance they require and appreciated being able to participate in today's meeting.

Marguerite Richard shared their opinions on recent political events and her concern for discriminatory acts occurring across the country.

Michael Fuller shared their opinion on organized crime and other political events.

Alex Tsimerman stated a complaint would be filed by Richard, Fuller, and himself requesting an investigation be conducted against the agency regarding the commission meetings.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Commission moved into Executive Session to evaluate the qualifications applicants for public employment for the Executive Director position pursuant to RCW 42.30.1101(g). It was anticipated that the session would last until 10:30AM and then the general meeting would reconvene.

Executive Session started at 10:10AM and ended at 10:30AM.

After returning from Executive Session, Chair Cook recommended that the recruitment be extended to continue the recruitment. There was also discussion to invite a candidate the Commissioners had already interviewed back for a second interview with HRC staff.

Commissioner Gamboa entered a motion to move forward with Chair Cook's recommendation of extending the recruitment and inviting candidate RaShelle Davis back for a second interview with HRC staff. Commissioner Mohr seconded the motion, and it was carried.

2022 COMMISSION MEETING SCHEDULE

May 26, 2022 at 9:30AM:	Via Conference Call
June 23, 2022 at 9:30AM:	Via Conference Call
July 28, 2022 at 9:30AM:	Via Conference Call
August 25, 2022 at 9:30AM:	Via Conference Call
September 22, 2022 at 9:30AM:	Via Conference Call
October 27, 2022 at 9:30AM:	Via Conference Call
November 2022:	TBD
December 2022:	TBD

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:43AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Deborah Gonzales

DRAFT