

MINUTES

CHICAGO COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS (CCHR) BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING November 10, 2022

Attendance

Commissioners Present:

Nancy Andrade, Chair
Karina Ayala Bermejo
Marta Cerda
Dan Goldwyn
Rey Gonzalez
Daniel R. Hernandez
Ahmad Jitan
Esther Nieves
Mike Takada

Margaret Kulujian

CCHR Staff Present:

Kenneth Gunn
JoAnn Newsome
Kristen Lee
Daniel Serrano
Gloria Vu

Call to Order

Commissioner Andrade gave a welcome and thanked all for attending the first in-person meeting since the pandemic lockdown. An announcement was made that the meeting was being recorded. The meeting began without the establishment of quorum, but shortly afterwards full quorum was obtained and at that time a formal Call to Order was made. The meeting began with introductions of all who were present.

Commissioner's Report

As quorum was not established at the start of the meeting, the meeting proceeded as an informal gathering.

Commissioner Andrade shared that CCHR has been growing and expanding. The agency hired and promoted staff in key positions. Daniel Serrano was hired as the new Director of Inter Group Relations and Kristen Lee was promoted from Human Relations Investigator II to Director of Human Rights Compliance/Fair Housing. The Director of Human Rights Compliance/Employment position remains open, but candidates have been identified and interviews are being scheduled. Gloria Vu was promoted from Executive Administrative Assistant to Human Resources Business Partner.

The Commission has been working in collaboration with other City Departments on assisting with the new arrivals from Central and Latin America, namely Venezuela, to Chicago. The Commission's role in this effort is conducting "Know Your Rights" presentations at City-run shelters housing single men, single women, and families. CCHR staff working on this are native Spanish speakers, bilingual and bicultural. They are sensitive to the needs of the new arrivals. Being bicultural helps establish open communication, the new arrivals ask questions about their rights and they feel welcomed. The busing of migrants to Chicago from Texas will continue. The City's priorities are two: 1. Provide shelter, meals, and clothing 2. Help the new Chicagoans adapt and fully engage.

Commissioner Andrade asked Board Member Karina Ayala Bermejo to give a summary of her organization, Instituto del Progreso Latino's, Amazon wish list that was established to help the new arrivals. Ms. Ayala-Bermejo gave an overview of the Rapid Response wish list program. There is a link on Instituto's website.

Commissioner Andrade announced that Esther Nieves joined the meeting, which now established a quorum and a Call to Order was made. A motion to approve the minutes from the June meeting was made, all voted in favor and the motion carried.

CCHR Regulations

JoAnn Newsome, Deputy Commissioner, presented on the changes made in September to the CCHR's regulations. Fines for violating the substantive provisions of the Ordinance will increase, from \$500 to \$1,000, to \$5,000 to \$10,000. The fines are payable to the City of Chicago as opposed to damages which are payable to the prevailing complainant. Deputy Commissioner Newsome asked the board to review the regulations and approve them because while the city council approves ordinance amendments, the board approves amendments to the regulations. After questions and a discussion regarding the new regulations, the Commissioner asked for a motion to approve the updated regulations. The motion was made, all voted in favor and the motion carried.

Deputy Commissioner Newsome gave an overview of the adjudication division. Approximately 30% of cases are found to have substantial evidence of discrimination. The CCHR has seen an uptick in complainants not wishing to settle. Of the last 12 substantial evidence filings, only two complainants agreed to settle their case. The 10 unsettled cases are now in the hearing stage. Due to motions for continuance and other pre-hearing procedures, it can take up to six months before an administrative hearing is held. There has been an increase in complaints alleging sexual harassment in employment, but the CCHR has also seen an increase in complaints alleging sexual harassment in housing, primarily in the Latinx community. Commissioner Andrade noted the importance of outreach in the Latinx community to address this issue. She stated that she has spoken to members of the Latino Consular Corps regarding this issue and will collaborate with them by providing "Know your Rights" presentations.

Deputy Commissioner Newsome gave an overview of the Board member's role in the adjudication process together with an overview of the steps involved in the adjudication process itself. Upon completion of a hearing, the administrative hearing officer will draft a recommended ruling that is sent to the Board for their consideration. Each case will be reviewed by a panel of the Board, a smaller group of four to five Board members who serve on a quarterly basis. Approximately 10 days prior to a case being presented at a Board meeting, the full Board will receive the recommended ruling prepared by the administrative hearing officer. The Board panel, however, will receive the entire record, including transcripts and other pertinent information. The panel meets prior to the Board meeting to discuss the case. The panel will decide whether to accept, reject or modify the hearing officer's recommendation. Modification may entail an increase or reduction in damages. A hearing officer might recommend the finding of no liability and the panel might disagree and reject the recommendation. A decision to reject the hearing officer's recommendation must be based on the Board's belief that the finding was "against the manifest weight of the evidence." The board panel will then present its recommendations to the full Board.

CTA Ad Campaign

First Deputy Commissioner Ken Gunn announced that the CCHR received funding to launch a CTA Ad campaign. CCHR ads will be posted in CTA buses and trains throughout the city for one month during the mid-November to mid-December calendar period. There is funding to continue the ad campaign in the next fiscal year. The ads feature a QR code which will take readers to the CCHR website where they will be able to access other languages as well.

Hate Crimes

Commissioner Andrade spoke about the role of CCHR in addressing hate crimes. Together with Danny Serrano, the new Director of Intergroup Relations, and Hate Crime Victims Advocate Norman White, the CCHR is building a robust framework to address hate crimes. The team works closely with the Hate Crime Coalition, which is comprised of 25 different organizations and representatives from diverse groups. The CCHR is planning a Hate Crime Summit in 2023. During the 2022 budget hearing, the CCHR reported on the increase in hate crimes, particularly in the Jewish community and the black community. The Commissioner has reached out to Board Member Dan Goldwin regarding scheduling a meeting with leaders of the Jewish community. CCHR will also be reaching out to the Black, Latinx, Muslim, and Asian communities to have in-depth conversations on how to move forward and work together to combat hate. Commissioner Andrade announced that a Unity Brunch will be held in January 2023. The Brunch will initiate dialogue on the topics of prejudice, discrimination, and hate/hate crimes. The takeaways from the brunch will be the foundation for the hate crime summit to take place in late spring of 2023.

Board Member Dan Goldwin provided an overview of the Nonprofit Security Grant Program. In 2017, the State of Illinois began program called the Nonprofit Security Grant Program. Governor Pritzker allocated \$20 million into the budget for this program. The application deadline closes on January 16, 2023. The grant covers capital improvements, security equipment, and security training such as active shooter training.

Commissioner Andrade stated that the issue of hate crimes is a priority for the CCHR. She noted several incidents recently reported in the media: one of a noose found hanging in the construction site of the Obama Presidential Center ; a nightclub that hosted an adult puppet show featuring a puppet that was saying derogatory things about the black community; and a female artist who was placing posters featuring a noose, to generate attention to her art exhibit in Hyde Park. In the case of the puppet show, the CCHR received a call from an Aldermanic office bringing the matter to our attention. The Commissioner reached out to Board Member Dan Goldwin of the Jewish United Fund for some guidance in terms of artistic expression and freedom of speech while balancing the rights of the establishment and community to speak out against it. Danny Serrano noted the importance of educating business owners about the city's human relations ordinances. The CCHR will be reaching out to business owners and scheduling meetings. First Deputy Commissioner Kenneth Gunn mentioned that CCHR has reached out to the city council members about hate crimes and noted the time was right to contact them again. The Board continued to discuss the issue of hate crimes and what falls under the umbrella of hate crimes.

Advisory Council Reports

Karina Ayala-Bermejo presented on behalf of the Advisory Council on New Americans. She spoke about the needs of the migrants that are coming to Chicago and how the City and its partners are responding. Esther Nieves reported on behalf of the Equity Advisory Council, she shared that the role of the Chief Equity Officer has been codified by a City ordinance which means that the role will exist going forward in City Government. Through this position and its office, all departments in the City of Chicago have the responsibility to set racial equity goals and plans on an annual basis. First Deputy Commissioner, Ken Gunn reported on behalf of the Veterans Advisory Council. He invited all to the Veterans Day celebration at Soldier Field. Members of the Veterans Advisory Council will be recognized. The council is working with the Mayor's office to re-install a Director of Veterans' Affairs.

New Business

Commissioner Andrade asked if there was any new business and there was none. In lieu of new business, she asked if anyone had any updates on their respective organizations and projects the Commission should be aware of. Board Member Margaret Kulujian invited everyone to the Restorative Justice program's graduation celebration of young people who successfully completed the class requirements and had their cases dismissed and records expunged. The graduation is on November 18, 2022. Commissioner Andrade spoke about the Hispanic Heritage Month program that was held at Daley Plaza on October 15th. Karina Ayala Bermejo invited everyone to volunteer at Instituto del Progreso Latino's monthly food distribution and holiday events. Esther Nieves expressed her gratitude for the assistance of City and State of Illinois employees who have helped at the shelters housing the families of new arrivals who have been bused to Chicago from the Texas border. She spoke about her experience in helping migrant families from Latin America and Africa.

Commissioner Andrade asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion was made, all voted in favor and the motion carried.