

**State of Maryland Commission on Civil Rights
Commission Meeting
June 14, 2022 – 10am
Meeting Held by Google Hangouts Meet
MINUTES**

Commissioners Present: Stephanie Suerth, MPA, CCEP, Chairperson; Diane E. Bernier; Eileen M. Levitt, SPHR, SHRM-SCP; Jeff Rosen;

Staff Present: Alvin O. Gillard, Executive Director; Cleveland L. Horton II, Deputy Director; Glendora C. Hughes, General Counsel; Kara N. Hunt, PhD, Director of Education & Outreach, Gerald T. Ford, Executive Associate; Alesha Bell, Investigative Unit Supervisor

Meeting called to order at 10:03 am

- Quorum not present so the motion to approve May 2022, minutes was tabled.

Chairperson's Report

Chairperson reserved a table for the Gala. The Chair will also send personal invitations to the Governor, Lt. Governor, and others to attend. The Chair will follow up with these invitations.

Spoke with the Director and the Vice Chair about setting up a strategic planning session in regard to the numerous engagement activities discussed in past and to develop some sort of timeline, benchmarks and deliverables on these initiatives.

Chair then asked the Executive Director to introduce the new member of the team, Gerald Ford. Mr. Ford thanked the Chair, Executive Director and Staff for their warm welcome. He is coming from Loyola University and is excited to be a part of the MCCR team.

Executive Director's Report

- Had the opportunity a couple of weeks ago to meet with the Kelby Brick and the members from the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Meeting was productive and was able to talk about areas of mutual interest and collaboration. Cleveland Horton is now the agency representative with the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Advisory Board. Special thanks to Commissioner Jeff Rosen for facilitating the two agencies to meet.

- The Executive Director, General Counsel and Cecilia Assad, Supervisor of the Housing Unit, met with an international delegation sponsored by the World Trade Center Institute on June 9. Between 10 to 15 people from countries as diverse as Montenegro, Brazil, Germany, the United Kingdom and several others came to MCCR to discuss the vision, mission and general operations and services of MCCR.

- The Executive Director expressed gratitude for the Commissioners and staff for their hard work. We are living in perilous, challenging times. It feels like civil rights and the progress and promotion of civil rights is in relative peril of right now. Sometimes our work may not always be recognized or appreciated, but the work of everyone at MCCR is doing important work. “I want to thank all of the commissioners and staff for your commitment and for what you bring to the table each and every day and each and every month and we're going to continue to be an efficient and effective agency and the work that you are engaged in does not go unnoticed it is appreciated, so thank you”.

Deputy Director’s Report

- For the month of May we brought in 46 complaints
 - 26 employment
 - 19 housing
 - 1 one public accommodations
- Number is slightly down from the previous month about 30%.
- A total of 27 aborts for the month of May
- Housing and PA units,
 - 141 open housing cases.
 - Average Numbered days open for those cases is 565 days. (Note This number is driven by the Profit case which is 1800 days old. If we remove this case, the number drops to 220 days which is 5 days higher than what it was last month. Case is still in litigation.)
 - Have 16 open Title XX only cases with an average of about 329 days (a 10% increase from last month)
 - 34 open PA cases with the average number of days open for those cases is 577 days a slight increase of about 6% from last month.
 - In May, Housing unit was able to close 11 cases that'll are dual-filed with HUD.
 - Closed 3 housing Title 20 only cases with a total monetary settlement of about \$500 for those cases.
 - Closed 4 PA cases with the total monetary sum of about \$1500.
 - Legal was able to close one housing case with a monetary settlement of about \$18,000 (to the Complainant \$5,000 for legal fees and \$1000 civil penalty.
- Employment
 - As of June 1, had about 340 open employment cases
 - About 255 employment cases in backlog status (10% increase from last month)
 - Average number of days for our employment cases is 354 days (17% decrease for last month.
 - During the month of May, closed 36 employment cases with the monetary benefit of \$2300.
- EEOC reporting:
 - Still working with EEOC. Had a conversation to see if we can be a part of reviewing the report and functionality before it goes live just to make sure it's

going to give us everything we need. As to when it will be ready, the target time is the end of the summer.

- Housing contract:
 - Because of MCCR's staffing challenges this past fiscal year, MCCR anticipates a decrease in a number of cases closed.
 - Last year last year, submitted around 155-158 this year we expect to be somewhere around 90-95 cases.
 - Kudos goes to the Education and Outreach Unit who took on about 15 or so cases saved us from losing about \$60,000 to \$70,000 in federal funds

General Counsel's Report

- Summer interns on board and one of the assignments is to review the issue concerning weight/obesity discrimination. Preparing a chart of what other states are doing and looking at case law regarding obesity as a protected class.
- Presentations:
 - Presentation in conjunction with Education and Outreach "Disability and Reasonable Accommodations workshop.
 - Legal presentation with Free State Justice legal staff regarding MCCR policies and procedures as well as instructions on how best to for them to represent their clients before the Commission.
- Cases;
 - Rowe case, which was in the Court of Special Appeals, there was no timely motion of reconsideration filed so for all intents and purposes, the case is closed.
 - Case filed in Harford County Circuit Court against the Executive Director and one of the supervisors. The attorney in question is believed to be disbarred at this time. We have contacted the Attorney General's Office to represent both MCCR staff in this matter. Technically, the lawyer has never properly served MCCR, the lawyer filed in Harford County, but we are in Baltimore city.

Assistant Director's Report

- No report due to the vacancy of this position.

Director of Education & Outreach's Report

- Events Attended
 - Asian American Heritage Festival
 - Older Americans Information Fair
 - Jewish Community Block Party
- Trainings and Outreach
 - Listening session in the wake of the violence in Buffalo. More than 230 participants.

- Disability and Reasonable Accommodations workshop, over 200 participants.
- Western Maryland Advisor Council Update
 - E&O went out to Frostburg State University for the Advisory Council meeting. The Council is working on three ongoing projects;
 - Create a resource list for individuals facing housing insecurity as well as individuals who have experienced alleged discrimination/hate bias. Once list is created, a QR code and materials will be created to disseminate information.
 - Outreach to local law enforcement with the goal of creating a database for reporting bias incidents. The short term goal is to have a law enforcement forum in October.
 - Hate Bias Survey. Was created prior to the pandemic but was not implemented. It's now being implemented and a QR code and other materials have been created and disseminated at outreach events. The goal is to have the finding of the survey in the Fall.
- Young Scholars Program
 - In the beginning stages of planning with the Prince Georges County Public Schools and negotiating creating a program in Baltimore City Public Schools.
- Maryland Equity and Inclusion Leadership Program
 - This Cohort consists of people exclusively from the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (MDHCD) through a grant.
- Upcoming
 - Workshop "Public Accommodations Accessibility and the Law" on June 15.
 - Workshop "LGBTQ+ Workplace Protections and the Law" on June 22nd.

Old/New Business

- Discussion was tabled due to lack of a quorum.
- Chair of the Commission expressed an ongoing need to work to increase the Commission's visibility. Executive Director shared we have started to work on an overall social media strategy.

Meeting adjourned at 11:12 am.