

**State of Maryland Commission on Civil Rights**  
**Commission Meeting**  
**April 9, 2024 – 10am**  
**Meeting held virtually via Google Meet**  
**MINUTES**

**Commissioners Present:** Stephanie Suerth, MPA, CCEP, Chair; Janssen E. Evelyn, Esq, Vice Chair; Jeff Rosen; Magdalena S. Navarro, Eileen Levett, Gina McKnight-Smith

**Management Present:** Cleveland L. Horton II, Deputy Director; Dia Drake- Sprague, Director of Education and Outreach, Nicolette Young, Assistant Director

**Staff Present:** Gerald T. Ford, Executive Associate; Alesha Bell, Unit Supervisor (Employment)

**Members of the Public:** None

**Meeting called to order at 10:07 a.m.**

**Chairperson’s Report**

The Chair reminded everyone that the financial disclosure reports are due at the end of the month. The Chair reminded the Commissioners about the Gala on August 24<sup>th</sup>.

**Deputy Director’s Report**

The Maryland Association of Human Rights Agencies (MAHRA) will now be a program listed under the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights. The Assistant Director is working on streamlining the protocols, procedures, and policies of MAHRA to become in compliance with the State of Maryland.

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (MCCR) and the MD State Commission of Real Estate Appraisers, Appraisal Management Companies, and Home Inspectors (SCREA et.al.) officially signed a Memorandum of Understanding, (MOU) regarding fair housing issues. Specifically, this MOU allows MCCR to receive and investigate complaints directly from SCREA as it pertains to discrimination in housing appraisal.

MCCR is looking to update its website to provide the public with as much information as possible regarding our processes and educating the public about discrimination.

The Deputy Director also highlighted a few points from the Case Processing Unit’s written report.

## **Assistant Director's Report**

Currently, MCCR has expended 84.2% of its budget.

MCCR currently has two vacancies:

- Civil Rights Officer II – position vacant effective April 2, 2024. Anticipate conducting an internal recruitment to move a contractual CRO into the permanent position.
- Assistant General Counsel I – The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) approved reclassing a vacant CRO III position to an Assistant General Counsel I. The position will help address unsustainable workloads in the General Counsel's Office. Anticipate recruiting for the position by mid-April 2024.

Additional funding support in FY 2024 for three contractual positions was submitted to the General Assembly on March 26, 2024, as part of Governor Moore's Supplemental Budget No. 2. When approved, MCCR will receive \$262,908 to include \$210,326 in general funds and an additional spending authority increase totaling \$52,582 in federal funds.

Adjournment or "Sine Die" of the 2024 Legislative Session is Monday, April 8, 2024. MCCR does not anticipate there will be any significant adjustments to what was submitted in the Governor's FY 2025 Allowance. We will receive the FY 2025 legislative appropriation in May 2024. FY 2025 is from July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025. The Assistant Director will be working with our DBM budget analyst to address any deficiencies that were not included in the original FY 2025 budget submission.

FY 2024 ends on June 30, 2024. The Assistant Director is working with DBM to ensure the agency closes in the black. Adjustments to FY 2024 that aren't reflected in our current appropriation is COLA and the additional funding support for the three contractual positions. We anticipate the funds will be reflected in our appropriation by June 2024.

Planning for the 2024 MCCR Biennial Gala is underway. As of April 1, 2024, 65 tickets have been sold and revenue collected totaled \$7,125. Additionally, MCCR was awarded a \$5,000 sponsorship from the Department of Housing and Community Development's Office of Community Engagement. MCCR will be submitting budget amendments to DBM to receive spending authority to utilize the funds in FY 2024 and FY 2025.

## **Education and Outreach Report**

For 2024, the E&O team has created and implemented a robust marketing plan.

- *Radio Ads*: E&O has radio ads running on 92Q and 95.9. They are 30 second commercials that are on a Saturday to Sunday and a Monday through Sunday rotation. These ads will run April 1<sup>st</sup> -15<sup>th</sup>.

E&O also has ads on Bright FM (95.1) from Tuesday through Thursday from 5:30 -8:00 PM and Monday through Friday, 6:00 AM - 7:00 PM. These ads will run from April 1<sup>st</sup> to April 30<sup>th</sup>.

- *Digital Ads:* E&O will run ads via the Baltimore Sun E-newspaper, Facebook, and Instagram. The ads will be designed to lead viewers to click on our website link.
- *Social Media:* For our social media platform, E&O goal was to increase social media following by 5%. For Facebook and Instagram, E&O met that goal.

E&O has the following events scheduled for April:

- Fair Housing Forum – April 18<sup>th</sup> in Greenbelt, MD
- Virtual Forum *Neurodiversity at Work* – April 17 (virtual)
- Western Maryland Listening Sessions
  - April 22<sup>nd</sup> in Garrett County
  - April 23<sup>rd</sup> in Alleganey County
  - April 24<sup>th</sup> in Washington County

### **New Business**

The Deputy Director revealed MCCR's staff priorities for 2024. Although each unit in MCCR developed their own unique priorities, the agency wide priorities are as follows:

- Research and identify areas in which we believe that we need to expand our authority (Educational Institutions, Criminal Records, Pregnancy, Commercial Discrimination, Public Accommodations, etc.) and develop the rationale for the expansion of our authority.
- Develop and implement ways in which we can increase our awareness within the community and amongst organizations.
- Increase our Probable Cause percentage.
- Increase our partnership with grassroots and non-profit organizations within the civil rights landscape (includes community and advocacy organizations)
- Provide increased and consistent communications and updates to staff.
- Identify partner agencies that are willing to provide office space that will allow us the opportunity to reopen satellite offices to have a higher level of impact within different communities.
- Work closer with local human rights agencies around issues impacting our communities.
- Provide more resources to Legal department.
- Research and identify funding sources for our agency to implement and sustain innovative and impactful programs.
- Develop and implement targeted strategies for us to be more involved in addressing issues pertaining to Hate within the communities in which we serve.

- Revise current regulations to address probable cause concerns and other outdated issues/concerns.
- More team building activities.
- Consider implementing an ADR process (Mediation).
- Identify and implement our MCCR Culture of 2024 and beyond.

**The meeting went into executive session at 11:18 a.m.**