



**MINUTES**  
**BELOIT EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**  
**AND HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION**  
**Wednesday, July 21, 2010**

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Staff called the meeting to order at 5:45 since the Chairperson and the Vice-chairperson were not present. Present: Commissioners Carolyn Lawrence, Kathryn Ingram, Gretchen Roy, Lynda Owens, Martin Densch and Staff Representative Teri Downing. Excused: Commissioner Thomas Ryan

2. Approval of Minutes of the March 17, 2010 Meeting

Commissioner Lawrence moved for approval of minutes of the regular meeting held on March 17, 2010. Commissioner Ingram seconded the motion. Motion carried.

3. Nomination and Election of Officers, 2010 Meeting

Teri Downing explained that the elected Chairperson, Emma Harrell has resigned from the commission and the elected Vice-chairperson, Alexander Brower has also resigned because he has graduated from Beloit College so moved out of Beloit.

a. Nomination and Election of Chairperson

Ms. Downing opened the meeting to nominations for Chairperson. Commissioner Ingram nominated Lynda Owens for Chairperson and Commissioner Lawrence seconded the motion. Commissioner Owens declined. Commissioner Lawrence nominated Kathryn Ingram for Chairperson and Commissioner Roy seconded the motion. Motion carried.

b. Nomination and Election of Vice-Chairperson

Chairperson Ingram opened the meeting to nominations for Vice-chairperson. Commissioner Lawrence nominated Gretchen Roy for Vice-chairperson Commissioner Ingram seconded the motion. Motion carried.

4. Public Participation

Chairperson Ingram opened the meeting to public participation but there were no members of the public present.

5. Review of Fair Housing Education and Outreach Contract with MSA Inc.

Staff explained that at its last meeting, the EOHRC recommended the MSA Inc. proposal be revised to include Four (4) live sessions in English only, two (2) live sessions in Spanish, two (2) webinars for landlords and real estate professionals, and two (2) webinars for lending professionals.

The Community Development Director accepted the above amendments with a minor change of decreasing the number of live English sessions to two (2) instead of four (4). Staff

explained the reason for this is that it is unknown what the turnout will be; we will start with two (2) and have the option to add more sessions if the need is apparent.

Staff informed the Commission that MSA Inc. submitted a contract with the above revisions, which was signed by the City Manager, Larry Arft.

Commissioner Lawrence asked if any of the EOHR members were able to attend any of the trainings. Staff informed the Commission that there were no Commissioners present.

6. Update on Fair Housing Activities

Staff informed the Commission that the City of Beloit and MSA have offered two fair housing education sessions. A webinar for landlords & real estate professionals was held on Tuesday, June 8, 2010 from 12:00PM – 1:00PM in which twelve (12) people registered and seven (7) attended. The other was a live session for residents held on Monday, June 14, 2010 from 6:30 – 8:00pm at the Beloit Public Library in which two (2) people attended.

Staff also presented the Commission with the educational materials developed by MSA and informed them that these materials are available on the City's website on the EOHR page.

Commissioner Lawrence asked if the Commission could receive a listing of the attendees of the webinar. Ms. Downing said she will ask MSA if they would be able to provide a list.

Commissioner Lawrence asked if the City was advertising the sessions. Staff explained that there was information put on the public access channel, the sessions were listed in the Stateline News in the Calendar section, "e-vites" were sent to all members of the Real Estate Association, flyers were placed at the Housing Services counter at City Hall where property owners obtain rental permits, flyers were also placed on the community bulletin board at City Hall for residents to see and take with them, and "stuffers" were placed in the Section 8 Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) envelopes sent to landlords.

Commissioner Lawrence suggested advertising at the churches in Beloit. Commissioner Owens suggested placing an ad in The Chronicle.

Commissioner Owens asked staff how the education and outreach was going overall. Staff explained that the MSA Consultant is very knowledgeable about the fair housing laws and is well prepared for all of the sessions. Ms. Downing explained that the difficulty has been getting people to come to the sessions.

7. Review and Approval of Conciliation Agreement for Complaint #09-03

Teri Downing informed the Commission that the Fair Housing investigator reached a determination of reasonable cause to believe that discrimination has occurred in Complaint #09-03. The Complainant was told that she would not be able to rent at Burton Ridge Apartments with her dog because of their "no pets" policy, even after she explained the animal was a service animal.

The investigator obtained a Conciliation Agreement to resolve the matter which is subject to approval by the EOHR per Beloit Fair Housing Code 20.05(8)(a)5.

The Complainant, Jodell Clark, provided a sworn statement that she has reviewed the response given by the Respondent and finds it reasonable. The City Attorney, Tom Casper, has reviewed the format of the agreement and determined it to be acceptable.

The Respondent, Premier Real Estate Management, LLC (management company for Burton Ridge Apartments), provided an outline of the Fair Housing training provided to all staff, an apology to the complainant, as well as the measures undertaken since the filing of the complaint that will be continued in order to ensure that similar discrimination does not happen in the future. The letter also states that all staff members understand the Fair Housing laws regarding disabled tenants and service animals.

Commissioner Ingram asked why the Conciliation Agreement included that Respondent's management staff carry cell phones; how it is related to the service animal? Staff explained that the Complainant had said if the person taking her call at Burton Ridge could have contacted management staff, perhaps they would have gotten the correct information and the Complainant would have been able to apply.

Discussion ensued, centering on the role of the Commission in investigations. Commissioner Owens raised concern that the Commission did not know about this complaint until now. Commissioner Lawrence raised concern that the investigator, John Markley, was not present to explain the complaint and respond to questions. Staff explained that the processes the Commission would be involved in are conciliation agreements, mediation agreements, appeals, and hearings.

Chairperson Ingram explained that the Commission's role is to be the final decision maker after the investigation is complete. If an agreement is made, the Commission approves or denies it. And if the parties cannot agree, the Commission then decides the agreement.

Ms. Ingram then discussed that with the Conciliation Agreement before them; the action to be taken by the Commission is to either agree or disagree with it. Commissioner Ingram stated that there were no fees or additional rent charged to the Complainant and the Complainant signed the agreement indicating that the Complainant was satisfied with the steps taken by the management. Commissioner Roy stated that the landlord appears to have put steps in place to educate his employees and made efforts so that this should not be repeated.

Commissioner Roy moved to approve the Conciliation Agreement for Complaint #09-03. Commissioner Ingram seconded.

Commissioner Lawrence stated that she does not agree with approving the agreement. Discussion ensued, centering on the Commission's role in the reasonable cause determination and on not knowing enough about the case and investigation. Staff indicated she would mail the minutes of the meeting that City Attorney, Tom Casper, attended clarifying the fair housing complaint process to Commissioners Lawrence and Owens.

After discussion, motion carried.

## 8. Upcoming Events

Teri Downing informed the Commission that there will be a live Fair Housing Education session in Spanish, an English session in September, and a webinar in two weeks for Lenders. Staff said she would email the Commissioners the details regarding the two sessions.

9. Adjournment

Commissioner Ingram moved for adjournment and Commissioner Lawrence seconded. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 PM by Kathryn Ingram.

Teri Downing  
Special Programs Administrator