



CITY HALL • 100 STATE STREET • BELOIT, WI 53511

**MINUTES
BELOIT EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES
AND HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION**

Wednesday, August 15, 2012 at 5:30 PM

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Meeting was called to order at 5:34 PM by Chair Matt Finnegan.

Present: Commissioners Matthew Finnegan, Joseph Hansen, Marilyn Sloniker, Rick Valdez, Councilor Charles Kincaid, and Staff Representative Teri Downing. Excused: Commissioners Carolyn Lawrence and Alexis Siatos.

2. Approval of Minutes of the June 20, 2012 Meeting

Commissioner Valdez moved for approval of the minutes of the regular meeting held on June 20, 2012 and Commissioner Sloniker seconded with the correction that Commissioner Valdez was present at the June 20, 2012 meeting. The motion carried.

3. Nomination and Election of Officers:

a. Nomination and Election of Chairperson: Chairperson Matt Finnegan called for nominations for Chairperson. Joe Hansen nominated Rick Valdez. Matt Finnegan seconded and the motion carried.

b. Nomination and Election of Vice-Chairperson: Chairperson Rick Valdez called for nominations for Vice-Chairperson. Matt Finnegan nominated Marilyn Sloniker as Vice-Chairperson. Joe Hansen seconded and the motion carried.

4. Public Participation

There were no members of the public present.

5. Review of Draft of 2013 Strategy to Address Impediments to Fair Housing

Staff explained that the EOHR can decide to develop a strategy each year to address impediments identified in the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing. And provided a draft based on input from the previous meeting. Staff also pointed out that the Commission does not have a mission statement, but may want to develop one. The Commission should also decide whether to adopt the final strategy by resolution.

The Commissioners discussed each item listed on the draft strategy document and compared it to the impediments listed in the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing (AI) and its recommendations.

Chair Valdez suggested splitting the Mission Statement into a separate project and adopting it by resolution. He suggested taking it out of the strategy so it will not change each year, only the strategy to address impediments will change from year to year. The Commission expressed consensus on this.

Commissioner Sloniker pointed out that this Commission also protects people in real estate transactions. She suggested that strategy E include targeting real estate agents as well as the lending community to support recommendation number 6 in the AI. The Commission expressed agreement with this.

The Commission discussed at length the need for financial literacy in the community and how the lack of financial literacy can contribute to people being more susceptible to housing discrimination. Discussion included adding a strategy to facilitate financial literacy in the community and that this would support AI recommendations 2 and 6.

Commissioner Finnegan motioned to add to the strategy, G: Facilitate financial literacy programs throughout the City. This activity will support recommendations 2 and 6. Commissioner Sloniker seconded. The motion carried.

The Commission discussed what the benefits would be for adopting the strategy by resolution. Staff explained that having a resolution and written strategies give the Commission a working document that outlines specific actions steps to further fair housing. The document also strengthens the Commission's position when applying for funding because it not only provides documentation that the City is taking active steps to address fair housing issues, but it also shows that the Commission is committed to carrying out fair housing activities. This documentation is also helpful for reporting purposes for many of the City's grants.

Chairperson Valdez instructed staff to prepare a resolution for adopting the strategy.

6. Discuss the Development of EOHRC Bylaws

Staff explained that the Commission has the authority to adopt rules and bylaws that would codify procedures for processing complaints, investigations, appeals, and the conduct of hearings. Staff recommended adopting bylaws to allow for more consistent administration of the Fair Housing Code which is one of the impediments identified in the AI. The Commission was provided with a sample table of contents from the bylaws of the Madison Equal Opportunities Commission.

The Commission had a short general discussion regarding the various topics of the Sections of the table of contents

Commissioner Hansen suggested that staff take the bullet pointed information the Commission already has in their handbook and putting into bylaw format as a starting point. Then the Commission can review it at their next meeting.

7. Upcoming Events

Staff explained that the CDBG process has begun and an application on behalf of the EOHRC would be submitted by the end of the week to the CDA for consideration of \$25,000 of funding for fair housing activities. Staff explained the CDBG process and that a final decision will be made by Council on November 5, 2012.

8. Adjournment

Commissioner Finnegan moved for adjournment and Commissioner Sloniker seconded. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 PM by Chairperson Valdez.

Teri Downing
Director of Community and Housing Services