



CITY HALL • 100 STATE STREET • BELOIT, WI 53511

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

**Wednesday, October 15, 2014 at 5:30 PM**

1. Call to Order and Roll Call:

The meeting was called to order at 5:35 pm by Chairperson Marilyn Sloniker.  
Present: Commissioners Marilyn Sloniker, Mary Weaver, Councilor Sheila DeForest, Steve Howland, Joe Hansen, Mike Zoril and Staff Representative Teri Downing.

2. Approval of Minutes of the August 20, 2014 Meeting:

Commissioner Hansen moved for approval and Commissioner Weaver seconded.  
Discussion followed.

Mike Zoril requested that police body cameras be placed on a future agenda.

**Motion carried.**

Staff reported that although the Commission had requested during their last meeting to draft an ordinance amendment to allow all City Committee and Commissions to set their own times without needing to seek Council approval, the City Attorney advises that this is outside the powers and duties of the Commission to make such a recommendation. Staff also informed the Commission that the City Attorney advises that making recommendations regarding the Police Department acquiring, requiring, and using more body cameras is outside the purview of the Commission as well. The City Attorney suggested that if this is a concern, individual Commissioners should discuss this issue with a Council Member or speak during the public participation portion of a Council Meeting

Commissioner Zoril said that the reason he would like the Police Department to have and use body cameras is due to the recent events in Ferguson. He said that if body cameras were used in all situations, it would clear up discrepancies. He said he discussed this with Councilor Deforest and had reached out to the Police Department but is awaiting more information in order to come up with a recommendation.

Councilor Deforest said that she had spoken with Chief Jacobs about the use of body cameras and that the Police Department currently has 12 of them.

Councilor Deforest said that he had spoken with Chief Jacobs about the use of body cameras and they do currently have 12 sets to be used for training and they will use with SWAT activity. She said that the Chief explained that the Police Department is in support of using the cameras, but the biggest issue is that the data storage is cost prohibitive. She said the Chief also said there are some issues that need to be clarified



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with chain of evidence, and that police departments are looking for direction from the states attorney's office. Councilor Deforest went on to explain how the cameras are a good interactive tool, and that squads are already equipped with cameras, so once there is a protocol developed, the possibility of body cameras may become a bigger priority.

Commissioner Zoril suggested allocating some of the EOC CDBG funds towards the cost of storage. Staff explained the CDBG process and that this type of activity ineligible under CDBG regulations.

Councilor Deforest said that she believes once the Police Department has a protocol in place, the City Council would make it a priority to pay for the data storage.

Commissioner Zoril suggested making a recommendation about body cameras. Councilor Deforest suggested placing the topic on the agenda for the next meeting.

Councilor Deforest said that the mission of the Commission is really narrow in its description, and this is concerning because she believes the Commission is concerned by issues broader than housing discrimination. She requested that a discussion about the EOC mission be placed on a future agenda because she would like to see the Commission broaden their scope.

Commissioner Hansen asked whether there are any other channels people could go to regarding discrimination. Staff explained that within the City there are no other Commissions regarding discrimination. She explained that the EOC used to have a broader scope to include employment discrimination. Staff explained that under the duties and powers of the EOC there is opportunity for discussion on race relations and implement studies.

Commissioner Weaver asked why the Commission was narrowed and that she believes it would be worthwhile for the community to have this Commission active in various areas in addition to housing. Staff explained that there were quorum and staffing issues.

Commissioner Zoril indicated that the School Board was in the process of forming sort of commission to deal with issues similar to what this Commission use to do.

Chairperson Sloniker explained that employment issues are handled by the Equal Rights Division in Madison or Milwaukee.

Councilor Deforest said she can understand why the focus was narrowed and that she does not feel the need to become the authoritative body where one already exists. She said she would like to see the Commission conduct education, prevention activities, and look at the sociologically to see what we can do to improve equity and prevent discrimination. Staff indicated that the powers and duties listed under Section 1.82, the Commission is authorized to perform those activities.



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Commissioner Zoril said he believes the body cameras may fit within that scope. He said the Commission can study, analyze, and take action. He said an example may be to pass a resolution to study major socio-economic cultural problems.

Marilyn requested that staff add this topic for discussion to a future agenda.

3. Public Participation:

There were no members of the public present.

4. Update Annual Strategy to Address Impediments to Fair Housing:

Staff read the staff report which explained that the Commission develops and annual strategy to respond to the various impediments to fair housing and recommendations that are listed in the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing.

Commission members asked who developed the recommendations, whether they are similar to other communities, and who carries out the recommendations. Staff explained that she, two interns, and the EOC developed the Analysis, that Beloit's impediments and recommendations were similar to other communities in Wisconsin, and the Commission facilitates activities to carry out the recommendations.

Staff explained that this is why the EOC came up with the Annual Strategies to Address Impediments to Fair Housing. Staff detailed the activities that were performed in 2014 regarding each of the strategies.

There was discussion among Commission members regarding Strategy E, having a member of the lending community join the Commission. Chairperson Sloniker indicated that she had approached Blackhawk State Bank, and staff said that she had approached a staff member of NHS of Beloit, but the person did not live in the City. Staff also reached out to a Spanish speaking realtor in the City but has not gotten a response.

Chairperson Sloniker said she would ask someone from the lending community to come and speak at a Commission meeting about mortgage or lending issues.

Councilor Deforest requested to lay this item over for the next agenda so she could have more time to review.

Chairperson Sloniker made a motion to place the Annual Strategy to Address Impediments to Fair Housing on the next agenda. Commissioner Zoril seconded.

**Motion carried.**

5. Update on EOC Time Change and Commissioner Request to Eliminate Meeting Times in Ordinances:

Staff read the staff report which explained that the EOC had requested a meeting time change from 5:30PM to 5:45PM and is scheduled for City Council consideration at the 11-3-2014 City Council meeting. There was also a recommendation to eliminate



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meeting times in all ordinances for Committees and Commissions and staff said she was informed by the City Attorney that the EOC only has jurisdiction over its own ordinances and the powers and duties set forth in those ordinances; the EOC does not have the authority to make recommendations for other City Boards, Commissions, or Committees.

Commissioner Zoril suggested the Ordinance be changed at least for the EOC so we would have the flexibility to make our scheduled meeting times as needed without having to bug the City Council about it every single time. Commissioner Zoril suggested also moving the meeting day to a day of the week other than Wednesday so the Commission would not need to worry about running into Plan Commission Meetings.

Discussion followed regarding availability of the members and Forum on other days of the week.

Commissioner Zoril made a motion for City Staff to draft and present an Ordinance to City Council to allow the EOC to have flexibility in changing meeting times as needed without City Council approval for each change. Commissioner Hansen and Councilor Deforest expressed concern regarding adequate time for public noticing of the meetings.

Commissioner Howland informed the Commission that they had entered discussion without having a second to the motion. Chairperson Sloniker asked for a second. There was no response. **Motion failed.**

Councilor Deforest said that a benefit to having changes go before City Council is that it gets a little more public recognition, and provides an opportunity to notify the public of a change. She said it is good because we want transparency.

Commissioner Zoril made a motion to change the EOC meeting date to be the 1st Wednesday of every other month instead of the current 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of every other month.

Staff said that moving the meeting to the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday may still pose an issue as Plan Commission meets the Wednesday following every City Council meeting which would cause the same issue as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday. Commissioner Zoril asked the Commission if the wording should be "except when the Plan Commission meets which then we would meet the 5<sup>th</sup> Wednesday". Commissioners discussed that this would be confusing to the public and it would cause difficulty with public notices.

Chairperson Sloniker asked for a second, with no response. **Motion failed.**

6. Update on Fair Housing Activities:

Staff provided a report of fair housing costs from 2011 through 2014.

Commissioner Zoril commented that one of the big expenses is postage and asked if we could purchase forever stamps in advance to reduce costs.



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Staff explained that the City leases a postage machine that has a discounted postal rate, and that costs should be going down because packets are being emailed and hand delivered more often now rather than being mailed.

Commissioner Weaver asked about the approximate cost was for a consultant for the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing. Staff said in 2004 it was approximately \$20,000.00.

Staff indicated that there is a handout that explains the requirement to perform fair housing activities of Cities that receive CDBG funding. She explained that included in that was also a list of eligible fair housing activities that qualify to be funded out of CDBG funds, which include outreach counseling and referral, fair housing counseling, ordinance modification, information programs, enforcement, cooperation, and testing. Staff said under Chapter 20, the Commission has the authority to perform testing.

Discussion followed regarding the need and cost of wheelchair ramps. This type of construction is an eligible request under the City's Housing Rehab Loan program and Homecare Pharmacy has a program to construct ramps for no cost.

Commissioner Howland asked if there was a fair housing counseling program in the City. Staff explained that the City performs fair housing seminars to education people and property managers of their rights and responsibilities. She said Neighborhood Housing Services of Beloit receives CDBG funding to perform housing counseling and home buyer education seminars as well, in which some fair lending and fair housing regarding real estate transactions is touched on. She said if there are issues regarding fair housing, NHS generally works with the parties to resolve the issues but no complaint is usually filed.

Sheila said that she would like to do testing in order to use it as an opportunity to see where we need to educate people and work more closely with landlords to inform them of their rights and responsibilities. Staff informed the Commission that a fair housing informational flyer for landlords was sent out with all rental permit applications.

7. Commissioner Comments and Upcoming Events:

Commissioner Deforest requested a future agenda item to be the use of funds for testing. Commissioners shared some discrimination in housing issues they have personally experienced.

Commissioner Zoril asked staff about the availability of Wi-Fi access, and staff said she informed the I.S. Division and they are working on the issue.

Commissioner Zoril asked staff about the requirements regarding Rental Permits when there is a Land Contract, and a discussion followed regarding rental permits and the responsibility for property maintenance issues regarding unrecorded vs. unrecorded land contracts.



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A discussion between Chairperson Sloniker and staff occurred regarding the statute of limitations for fair housing complaints. Staff informed the Commission that a complaint must be filed within 365 days from the date of discovery which is similar to state and federal requirements.

8. Next Meeting Date:  
December 17, 2014

9. Adjournment:  
Commissioner Howland made a motion to adjourn, and Chairperson Sloniker seconded. **Motion carried.** The meeting was adjourned at 7:09PM by Chairperson Sloniker.

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Date approved by EOC

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Teri Downing  
Director of Community and Housing  
Services