



CITY HALL • 100 STATE STREET • BELOIT, WI 53511

**MINUTES
BELOIT EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES
COMMISSION**

Wednesday, August 17, 2016 at 5:45 PM

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chairperson Zoril called the meeting to order at 5:46 PM. Commissioners Zoril, Hansen, Howland, and Perreault, were present. Councilor Dunkin and Commissioner Weaver were absent.

2. Approval of Minutes of the March 16, 2016 Special Meeting

Minutes of the March 16, 2016 meeting were not available so no action was taken.

3. Public Participation

There were no members of the public present.

4. Nomination and election of Officers

a) Nomination and Election of Chairperson

Commissioner Perreault nominated Commissioner Zoril for Chairperson. Commissioner Hansen seconded the motion. **Motion carried 4-0.**

b) Nomination and Election of Vice-Chairperson

Commissioner Hansen nominated Commissioner Howland for Vice-chairperson. The motion was not seconded.

Commissioner Howland nominated Commissioner Hansen for Vice-Chairperson. Commissioner Perreault seconded the motion. **Motion carried 4-0.**

5. Discussion of Fair Housing and EOC Activities

Staff explained that in the past the Commission had developed and adopted each year a strategy to address impediments to fair housing, but that the Commission decided not to do this for 2016. Staff asked the Commission to decide what types of activities the Commission would like to focus on this year.

Chairperson Zoril asked how much funding was available to the EOC. Staff explained that the funding for 2015 needed to be reallocated since it was not going to be spent for the Analysis of Fair Housing (AFH) document (formerly known as the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing). AFH is not due until 2019.



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Commissioner Howland asked what the significant issues are in the community related to high number of rentals and low housing values. How the City's renovation projects with high costs and low sale price work. Whether the Commission and City could possibly work with landlords rather than be at odds with them. Whether there is an issue with land contracts and the possibility that people could be exploited by them. He asked how the Commission could add value somehow. He asked how all of the issues with vacant properties affect the community as a whole, especially the tax base and whether there were any data available that could be examined for racial disparities. He asked if the Commission could be more proactive rather than reactive and seek out ways to partner with other agencies and organizations that are dealing with these issues. He asked if the Commission could somehow raise awareness to these and other issues.

Commissioner Perreault said that it is difficult because she hears people in the community complain about fair housing issues, but the EOC struggles to have people become involved.

Commissioner Hansen agreed and gave the example that people complain about not being able to afford to buy a house, so EOC offered a class on home buying but hardly anyone showed up. He explained that there is a Section 8 Homeownership program that people may not be taking advantage of. He asked staff to explain how the Section 8 homeownership program worked.

Staff explained how the Homeownership Option Vouchers worked back when she was employed by the Housing Authority, and clarified that the rules may have changed since then. She also clarified that people need to already be enrolled in the Section 8 rental program in order to be eligible for the Homeownership Options Voucher. Commissioner Zoril asked if the EOC could apply for CDBG funds to assist with activities to assist with expenses and activities related to the Section 8 Homeownership program. Staff explained that the Housing Authority would need to apply for the funds for those activities.

Staff responded to Commissioner Howland's questions by explaining the Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area (NRSA) the City is currently preparing, and how Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) funding and other federal housing rehabilitation funding worked. She explained that using the funds in deteriorated neighborhoods for renovation projects is an investment and not a flip. That the tax payers recoup lost expenses in other areas over the long run.

Commissioner Perreault asked if the CDBG funding could be applied for and used by a volunteer construction business, perhaps run by a church program. Staff explained that these activities are eligible CDBG activities, but that there are extra rules regarding religious organizations operating such a program with federal funds.

Chairperson Zoril asked staff if there were any recommendations for activities or strategies for the EOC. Staff explained that there is Duffy Intern from Beloit College starting this fall that needs a project that would have a tangible work product at the end



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of the semester in December. She explained that perhaps this intern could prepare a plan or specific educational activities for the Commission, or define a role for the Commission to play in the larger NRSA plan.

Commissioner Howland explained that the mission of the EOC is to eliminate racism in Beloit. He said racism can be so subtle in so many places and intertwined with other factors such as poverty that it is hard to pinpoint.

Commissioner Perreault said that sometimes people do not even realize they are being discriminated against. She suggested placing an ad in the newspaper listing common discriminatory acts that people may not realize are discriminatory. The Commission had some general discussion about creating awareness and how best to do that. They discussed using more social media to raise awareness and suggested that the Duffy Intern may have some suggestion regarding this.

Chairperson Zoril asked staff to request from the Police Department the number of drug related offenses, broken down by race, age, and gender and the associated fines related to those offenses. Commissioner Howland asked staff to also request Use of Force statistics broken down by the same categories. Commissioners discussed that they could examine those numbers to determine whether there might be disparity and focus on education surrounding those issues.

6. Commissioner Comments and Upcoming Events

Staff reminded Commissioners that there was a Fair Housing seminar held at Rock County Job center the day before. Chairperson Zoril requested that staff obtain the number of attendees for the event and share with the Commission.

7. Next Meeting Date: October 19, 2016

Chairperson Zoril announced the next meeting date.

8. Adjournment

9. Commissioner Howland made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Hansen seconded. **The motion carried** and the meeting adjourned 6:57PM.

Date approved by EOC

Teri Downing,
Director of Community and Housing Services