

ALEXANDRIA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2023
6:30 p.m., Del Pepper Community
Resource Center
4850 Mark Center Drive
1st Floor Conference Room 1305

Members Present

Lisl Brunner, Chair
Marc Bendick
Matt Harris
Susan Kellom
Elisabeth "PJ" Palmer Johnson, Vice Chair
Megan Prince
William Tom Reeder, Jr.
David Rigsby, Vice Chair
Jon Thompson
Scott Schwartz,

Staff Present

Jean Kelleher, Director
Miladis Martinez Gutierrez, Adm. Support
Anna McClure, Investigator
Namooode Khan, Investigator

Members Excused

Danielle Beach

Members Unexcused

Katherine O'Connell

Guests:

Mindy Weinstein, Director, EEOC Washington Field Office
Karen Loewy, Senior Counsel and Director of the
Constitutional Law Practice, Lambda Legal
Monica Colunga, Outreach and Education Coordinator
US EEOC Washington Field Office

The Human Rights Commission, in partnership with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), held a public forum, "New Developments in Civil Rights." Mindy Weinstein, Director of the EEOC's Washington Field Office, gave an overview of the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA), and said that the PPWFA is a new law that requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations to qualified workers with known limitations related to, affected by, or arising out of pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions unless the accommodation will cause the employer an undue hardship. Ms. Weinstein discussed the EEOC's proposed enforcement regulations for the PWFA, which the EEOC has recently published for comments. She encouraged everyone in attendance to read and submit comments on the proposed regulations by the deadline, October 10, 2023.

Karen Loewy talked about three recent Supreme Court decisions: in *303 Creative LLC v. Elenis*, which has raised serious concerns about the legal protections offered to LGBTQ+ individuals; *Students for Fair Admissions Inc. v. President & Fellows of Harvard College* and *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. University of North Carolina*, which struck down affirmative action in college admissions; and, *Groff v. DeJoy*, which requires employers to show a "substantial burden" before denying a religious accommodation. Regarding the *Groff* case, Ms. Loewy noted the concern that this decision may open the door to employees citing their religious beliefs to allow hostile treatment of LGBTQ+ employees.

1. Call to Order/Introductions by Commissioner Harris

Vice Chair Rigsby called the meeting to order at 8:33 p.m. Introductions were made.

Chair Brunner asked Commissioner Harris if he could speak for three minutes at the next Council meeting and give a briefing on the Commission's public forum.

2. Approval of Minutes of July Meeting

Upon a motion by Commissioner Harris, seconded by Commissioner Schwartz, the Commission approved the minutes of the July meeting. All Commissioners present voted aye.

3. Executive Committee

Legislative Proposals for City Package

Vice Chair Rigsby stated that he put together the draft of the legislative package and asked for comments to be sent to him individually.

Commissioner Bendick stated that he does not think it is appropriate to endorse other Commission's legislative proposals without knowing what is in them. Director Kelleher explained that this has been done in the past because the Commission has five liaisons that represent those Commissions. As such, the endorsement is only for the packages from those five Commissions.

Vice Chair Palmer Johnson will send copies of the Commission for Women's legislative proposals for the Human Rights Commission's endorsement. She stated that they are supporting legislation that limits rent increases relative to the consumer price index. She stated that they are also supporting legislation that prohibits more than one rent increase in a year. Commissioner Schwartz asked if there is a provision to do away with the Dillon Rule.

4. Discussion Topics

Chair Brunner stated that the HIV/AIDS Commission is looking for a liaison from the Human Rights Commission.

Chair Brunner stated that the Commission had expressed interest in attending a meeting of the Community Policing Review Board and said that the next meeting is on Wednesday, October 4, from 7 - 9 p.m., at City Hall.

Chair Brunner also stated that the commission had talked about inviting Erika Kleiner, the City's LGBTQ+ Task Force Coordinator, to the October meeting to get information about transgender youth in the schools.

Chair Brunner also stated that the commission talked about focusing on School Resource Officers for the November meeting and looking at bringing in school administrators. Director Kelleher suggested inviting the School Board and Police.

Commissioner Harris stated that he had contacted Bryan Porter, who agreed to set up a series of talks to Alexandria City High School students about their interactions with the Police and what their rights are. Commissioner Harris said he has contacted some School Board Members, who are supportive of this

initiative and got him in touch with the School Superintendent. Commissioner Harris said they are now just trying to work out the details.

Commissioner Schwartz said that, if the commission plans on having a meeting involving the school resource officers, they may want to get a bigger room to hold that meeting, due to the community's increased interest in the issue.

Chair Brunner mentioned that there is a joint City Council and School Board School Law Enforcement Partnership (SLEP) Committee.

Director Kelleher stated that they talked about meeting virtually in December and perhaps inviting the Legal Aid Justice Center and having Commissioner Beach present on the Court decision on undocumented persons.

Commissioner Schwartz reported that he received an email from Hillary Orr, with TES, to schedule a meeting, on October 10 at noon, to talk about the rainbow crosswalks.

5. Announcements /Adjournment

Director Kelleher asked for a volunteer to attend the ALIVE! Food Hub on October 14, 2023, from 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Schwartz, seconded by Commissioner Palmer Johnson, the Commission voted to adjourn the meeting. All Commissioners present voted aye. The meeting was adjourned at 9:06 p.m.