



Meeting Minutes - Final

Affirmative Action and Human Rights Commission

Thursday, March 14, 2024

4:30 PM

City Hall, Room 207

Call To Order

PRESENT: 5 - Rashanda Cainion, Sam Peete, Barbara Farrar, Alicia Jarrett and Mary Coleman

EXCUSED: 4 - Don Nielsen, Roy Carter, Carmen Lassiter Ayers and Dasheika Kidd

Approval of Minutes for the February 8th, 2024 Meeting

Mary Coleman asked for more detailed minutes for AAHRC meetings. Alicia said she would try to capture more information from the meeting to add to minutes. A motion was made by Mary seconded by Barbara Farrar to approve the February 8th, 2024, minutes. Motion approved.

Approved

Subject: Equity Officer Update

DEI and LGBTQ+ training with Department of Public Works: 3 sessions held on 03/07, 03/12 and 03/14. Partnered with Payne & Frazier for DEI portion and Barb Farrar for LGBTQ+ training. Each group was very interactive and asked questions. It was a great start and an introduction to future trainings!

Women's History Month- I will be highlighting women within the City of Racine. Check out our Social Media pages for updates!

Youth Employment Coordinator interviews were held on 03/13 and hope to hire someone very soon!

*Upcoming Projects and Goals
Recruitment and application process for our Youth Employment program
Working with the Mayor to develop the Recruiter position (to help with our diversity and residency goal)*

Subject: Chair Update

Sam updated the Commission on next guest speaker. Representatives from the Racine Police Department are scheduled to attend on 11 April. Questions for the representatives are recommended to be sent to Sam Peete by Monday 8, April 2024.

Fair Housing presentation by City Development staff

Fair Housing presentation by City Development Staff; Cathy Anderson and Veronica Seymour

Cathy provided an overview of the Housing Development staff duties. Cathy oversees the Fair Housing program; she reviewed the Fair Housing Report for January-February 2024. She briefed the Commission that identifying information and individual incidents will not be included in future reports to protect the identity of complainants. Cathy provided an overview of issues their office handles; she wanted to point out that 98% of complaints received by their department do not fall under the Fair Housing Act of 1968 and Wisconsin Fair Housing laws, but usually include complaints from tenants about landlords/slumlords. In those cases, Cathy works with the RENTS Safe Racine Program and Kelly Reed to document and inspect poor housing conditions.

When the housing division identifies legitimate Fair Housing Act violations, they refer the complainant to Legal Action or the Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council. Cathy said some of the challenges they face when helping clients with Fair Housing complaints are that both those organizations do not return calls, or do not have the capacity or the staff to follow up with clients.

Sam Peete wanted to note that maybe additional funding for fair housing/legal action will help mitigate some of that burden. Rashanda asked if additional funding will be for an attorney. Cathy responded that data would need to be pulled to determine where the funding will best be utilized.

Sam asked about felon rights and what the protections are for someone convicted of a felon. Cathy responded that in the state of Wisconsin landlords cannot discriminate against felons; however, sometimes they find ways around that, ex. denying housing if felon and have a poor credit score.

Sam asked about housing for low- and middle-income families and the low housing stock in Racine. Cathy explained that the City Hall's ambition is to build more, and rehab existing apartments and single-family housing to provide housing for families that fall in those categories using Federal funds (AARPA), Low-income housing tax credits and WHEDA credits to fund low-income housing credits (LIHTC) for people with housing and VASH vouchers to find people decent and safe living solutions. For families making <\$50,000 there are some nonprofits that work with them to get into owner occupied housing like Habitat for Humanity, HRI and Racine Revitalization Partnership. Barb asked about building tiny homes in Racine, and Cathy expressed that there are not enough tracks of land available in Racine to build communities of little houses. She did point out that there is a tiny home village for veterans in Racine through the Veterans Outreach of Wisconsin.

Alicia asked if the department could work with the Commission to review and update the City of Racine fair housing ordinance (Article IIB-Fair Housing). Cathy said they would be happy to sit with the Commission, however members should also review the ordinance to see what they would like changed. The City Development staff is tentatively scheduled to return in May to review the ordinance.

Next Meeting Date: April 11th, 2024

April 11th meeting was cancelled

Adjournment

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.