

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS**



INFORMAL MEETING

May 8, 2013

One Judiciary Square, 441 Fourth Street, N.W., Conference Room 1117

ATTENDEES

Commissioners:

Nkechi Taifa, Chairperson
Michael Ward, Vice-Chairperson
Edwin Powell, Secretary
Motoko Aizawa
Alexandra Beninda
Gabriel Rojo
Earline Budd (via telephone)

Commission on Human Rights Staff:

David C. Simmons, Chief Administrative Law Judge
Eli Bruch, Administrative Law Judge
Dianne S. Harris, Administrative Law Judge

Office of Human Rights Staff:

Alexis Taylor, General Counsel

Members of the Community:

Samantha Riley, Board of Ethics and Government Accountability

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Taifa called the Commission's May meeting to order at 6:32pm.

II. ROLL CALL

Secretary Powell conducted the roll call. Six Commissioners were physically present at the meeting. Since eight Commissioners were not present, a quorum was not reached. However, with six Commissioners present, an informal meeting could be conducted. Although Commissioner Budd was connected to the meeting via telephone, for the purpose of establishing a quorum, she could not be counted as physically present.

III. ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES FROM THE MARCH MEETING

Since a quorum was not reached, the Commission was unable to adopt the Commission's March meeting minutes.

IV. REPORT OF THE OFFICE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

General Counsel Alexis Taylor gave the report on behalf of the Office and gave a brief overview of its performance since the last Commission meeting.

Ms. Taylor provided the Commissioners with detailed statistics on OHR's performance in March and April 2013. Thus far in FY 2013, OHR's total settlement benefits to date are \$1,190,539.74.

On April 18th, OHR held its 12th Annual Fair Housing Symposium which was attended by approximately 150 people.

OHR released fair housing webinars in five different languages on their website.

On April 27th, OHR participated in Youth Pride Day. Many attendees took "anti-discrimination" photos at OHR's booth which can be seen of OHR's Facebook page.

OHR is actively engaged in the Disability Advisory Committee for the Taxicab Commission. OHR is looking at ways to make taxicabs more accessible for persons with disabilities.

There were several personnel changes made by OHR. Alease Parsons, Supervisory EO Specialist, retired from OHR this month after 12 years. Al Santiago, Investigator, and Suzanne Greenfield, Bullying Prevention Program Director, both recently joined OHR.

V. REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Chief Judge Simmons delivered the report of the Commission and presented an overview of its performance since the last Commission meeting.

The Commission currently has a docket of 15 Commission cases, 6 OHR cases, and 5 CBX appeals.

Thus far in FY 2013, the Commission closed 4 Commission cases, 3 Office cases and 1 CBX cases. Chief Judge Simmons expects to reach the Commission's closure goals for the fiscal year.

A Commission case adjudicated in FY 2011 was recently summarily affirmed by the D.C. Court of Appeals.

Chief Judge Simmons gave an employment update of several former Commission law clerks.

Judge Harris was recently sworn in as a member of the Supreme Court Bar.

Chief Judge Simmons will put in a request to the Kaiser Family Foundation, Barbara Jordan Conference Center, to reserve the facility for the 2013 Commission award ceremony.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

Report on Budget Hearing before City Council

On April 19, 2013, the Commission had its Budget Hearing before the City Council's Committee on Workforce and Community Affairs, chaired by Marion Barry. At the Budget Hearing, Chief Judge Simmons testified on behalf on the Commission and answered Councilmember Barry's questions. In the future, Councilmember Barry would like Commissioners to appear at hearings and provide more input on the Commission's budget.

Report of the Education Efforts Concerning Returning Citizens

Chief Judge Simmons met with Director Velasquez and General Counsel Taylor to discuss the Attorney General's opinion on the statutory authority of the Commission. Since the Commission has held many public events in the past, we will seek clarification from the Attorney General's office to determine if the Commission can still perform these functions.

On April 25th, a webinar on the legal issues pertaining to returning citizens was held and attended by several members of the Commission, Commission staff, the Reentry Task Force, the Department of Human Resources, OHR, and the Office of Returning Citizens.

A possible idea is to hold an educational session for Commissioners to examine various legal positions pertaining to the issue of returning citizens, including learning about previous City Council bills. A possible date is July 17th. The educational session will likely be conducted in conjunction with the Commission on Returning Citizens and the Reentry Task Force.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

Board of Elections and Government Accountability Disclosure Requirements

Samantha Riley, of the Board of Ethics and Government Accountability, gave an overview of her Board and the financial disclosure requirements for serving on a District government commission. Ms. Riley answered several questions from the Commissioners.

VIII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

Michael Sindram dropped off several documents at the Commission office and requested that the documents be disseminated to the Commissioners at the Commission meeting. The Commissioners had an opportunity to examine the documents.

IX. ANNOUNCEMENTS

No announcements were made.

X. ADJOURNMENT

The Commission's May meeting was adjourned at 7:29pm.