

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



COMMISSION MEETING

January 16, 2013
One Judiciary Square, 441 Fourth Street, N.W., Conference Room 1117

ATTENDEES

Commissioners:

Nkechi Taifa, Chairperson
Edwin Powell, Secretary
Motoko Aizawa
Alexandra Beninda
Rahim Jenkins
Mathew McCollough
Denise Reed
David Scruggs

Commission on Human Rights Staff:

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

Office of Human Rights Staff:

Gustavo Velasquez, Director
Elliot Imse, Policy and Public Affairs Officer

Members of the Community:

Michael Sindram

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Taifa called the Commission meeting to order at 6:33pm.

II. ROLL CALL

Secretary Powell conducted the roll call. Eight Commissioners were present at the meeting. Since at least eight Commissioners were present, a quorum was reached.

III. ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES FROM THE SEPTEMBER MEETING

The Commission adopted the minutes from the Commission's November meeting.

IV. REPORT OF THE OFFICE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Director Velasquez gave the report on behalf of the Office and gave a brief overview on how OHR's docket affects the Commission's docket.

Director Velasquez provided the Commissioners with detailed statistics on OHR's performance in November and December 2012. Thus far in FY 2013, OHR's total settlement benefits to date are approximately 400k. Additionally, OHR found "probable cause" in 3 cases, but found "no probable cause" in 20 cases.

Director Velasquez discussed a recent report on the impediments to fair housing. The report can be found on OHR's website.

Director Velasquez provided a legislative update on Councilmember Marion Barry's Returning Citizens Bill. The Commissioners expressed interest in learning more about the Bill, including the possibility of holding a hearing. The Commission established a subcommittee comprised of Commissioners Jenkins, Powell, Scruggs and Chairperson Taifa to explore options on how the Commission will examine this issue.

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 14 Commission cases, 5 remanded cases, 5 OHR cases, and 5 CBX appeals. Additionally, the Commission has 3 cases involving attorney's fee petitions.

Thus far in FY13, the Commission has closed 1 Commission case, 1 OHR case, and 1 CBX case.

The Commission has a new law clerk for the spring semester, Claire Schulmeister.

At the next Commission meeting in March, elections for vice-chairperson and secretary will be held.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

Report on the 2012 Awards Gala

Chairperson Taifa gave the report on the 2012 Awards Gala.

The Award Gala was held at the Kaiser Family Foundation Building on Monday, December 17th from 5:30pm to 8:00pm.

The event honored the 1977 City Council members who enacted the D.C.

Human Rights Act. Several members of the 1977 City Council and family members of deceased City Council members were in attendance attend.

The winners of the Youth Human Rights Ambassador contest were announced. This year, the program received over 150 entries. The winning video can be found on the Commission's website.

The Commission awarded the Neil Alexander Humanitarian Award to Barbara Lett-Simmons.

Options on how the Commission will pay for the 2013 Award Gala were discussed.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

Strategy for Making Greater Use of the Commission's Website

Elliott Imse, OHR's Policy and Public Affairs Officer, gave a presentation on developing the Commission's website. Mr. Imse provided an overview of OHR's efforts to boost its profile by using social media and putting more content on its website. Mr. Imse asked Commissioners to provide him with photos of them engaging in events relating to the Commission's mission. These photos will then be uploaded and shared on the Commission's website.

VIII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

Michael Sindram spoke about his concerns with the Office and state of human rights in the District.

IX. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Michael Sindram told the Commissioners that Councilmember David Grasso was holding an event on January 17th.

X. ADJOURNMENT

The Commission's public meeting adjourned at 8:15pm.

XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Commission held an Executive Session closed to the public.