



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS  
BI-MONTHLY PUBLIC MEETING

OFFICIAL COMMISSION MEETING  
*Via Microsoft Teams*  
July 14, 2021

**ATTENDEES**

**Commissioners**

Motoko Aizawa, Chair  
Eleanor Collinson, Vice Chair  
Anika Simpson, Secretary  
Adam E. Maier  
Karen Mulhauser  
Teri Quinn  
Lauren Lowery\*\* (will be sworn in as a Commissioner on July 20, 2021)

**Office of Human Rights Staff**

Monica Palacio, Director  
Ajan Brown, Community Engagement Specialist

**Commission on Human Rights Staff**

Erika Pierson, Chief ALJ  
Brandes Ash, ALJ

**Guests**

Hon. J.P. Howard, DC Office of Administrative Hearings (former ALJ, DC COHR)  
Jen Jenkins

**MINUTES**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

- Chair Aizawa called the Commission's Official Meeting to order at 6:35 PM.

## **II. ROLL CALL**

- Commissioner Simpson conducted the roll call.
- A total of 6 commissioners appeared. There was a quorum.

## **III. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

- The 07/14/2021 agenda was adopted.

## **IV. ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES**

- The 05/12/2021 meeting minutes were adopted.

## **V. REFLECTIONS/ MOMENT OF SILENCE FOR DR. JOHN D. ROBINSON**

- Chair Aizawa shared that former Commissioner, Dr. John D. Robinson—a person of significant achievements, including being the first African American psychologist in both the U.S. Air Force and U.S. Navy—died on July 4, 2021.
- Chair Aizawa read a beautiful tribute to Dr. Robinson, from the Williams James College website.
  - <https://www.williamjames.edu/news/Celebrating-the-Life-of-Dr-John-D-Robinson.cfm>
- The Honorable J.P. Howard shared fond memories of Dr. Robinson.
- Meeting attendees observed a moment of silence in remembrance of Dr. Robinson.

## **VI. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR**

- Director Palacio shared the following updates:
  - OHR staff began returning to their offices on July 12, 2021.
  - The office is preparing to welcome customers sometime in the future and will continue to offer online services as well.
    - Some OHR employees will continue to work at the Marion S. Barry, Jr. Building, located at 441 4<sup>th</sup> Street,

NW. Other employees will work out of OHR's new site, located at 655 15<sup>th</sup> Street, NW;

- OHR continues to actively hire to address its backlog, including recently identifying two new investigators and attorney advisors;
- OHR Community Engagement Specialist, Ajan Brown, discussed various outreach opportunities and potential collaboration with the Commission's Outreach Committee. Outreach opportunities include:
  - Office hours at D.C. libraries, where persons from the general public can ask questions and even file a complaint for discrimination on the spot.
  - The Community Engagement Office has also thought about conducting "train the trainer" sessions, for commissioners who may want to give presentations.
- The Community Engagement Office has continued to host Human Rights Liaison trainings – with the next one occurring September 14-15, 2021.
- Commissioners are encouraged to sign up for trainings.

## **VII. REPORT OF THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE**

Chief Judge Erika Pierson gave the report for the Commission on Human Rights (Commission), highlighting the following:

- **Case Management System**
  - The migration of the Case Management System (CMS) to OCTO's server is complete and OCTO has granted OHR a waiver for the issues that were impeding the migration.
  - The Commission is currently testing the system to make sure there are no issues and, thereafter, will be ready to open the system to outside filers.
  - The Commission is still exploring a replacement system.
- **Staffing Updates**
  - DCHR posted the ALJ vacancy last week. However, it was posted at the wrong salary grade, so it was taken down. DCHR will repost the position.

- A full-time law clerk is set to start on July 26, 2021.
- The law clerk will join the Commission through Georgetown's Entry into Practice (EIP) program, a program for recent grads who have not yet found full time employment.
- There will be two new Commissioners joining us soon.
  - The Resolutions were presented to the Committee of the Whole on July 13, 2021 and added to the Legislative Agenda the same day:
    - PR24-220 Adam Maier
    - PR24-239 Wynter Allen
    - PR24-239 Anika Simpson
    - PR24-242 Maria Burnett
    - PR24 -241 Lauren Lowery
- Commissioner Collinson's appointment is expiring in December 2021. The reappointment process should begin soon.
- D.C. Government is back open, staff have the option of teleworking two days a week.
- **Commissioner Manual**
  - The Commissioner Manual is completed. Chief Judge Pierson welcomes any feedback on things to add to the manual and hopes to provide everyone with a hard copy at some point. In the meantime, Chief Judge Pierson emailed materials to the Commissioners.
  - Chief Judge Pierson will conduct a training for new Commissioners once they are sworn in. However, all Commissioners are welcome to attend.

### **VIII. REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE COMMISSION**

- Chair Aizawa encouraged everyone to read the July 1, 2021 Committee on Government Operations and Facilities Report, and particularly the section dedicated to OHR.
- Previously, the Commission discussed putting together a video presentation on or before July 8, 2021, commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Commission. Despite the passing of the July 8<sup>th</sup> date, Chair Aizawa mentioned that the video could always be incorporated into the Gala event this December. Moreover, the video is not only a commemorative tool but also another handy way to explain to the general public what the Commission does.

- Commissioner Quinn asked what is necessary to create the video presentation.
- Director Palacio said that the video would be 2-3 minutes long and discuss, among other things, the history of the Commission. The Commission could help with coming up with video content, selecting the vendor, and helping guide and bring the video to fruition.
  - Currently, there is FY21 funding for the video.

## **IX. NEW BUSINESS**

- a. Chief Judge Pierson discussed the following:
  - i. Bella Evangelista and Tony Hunter Panic Defense Prohibition and Hate Crimes Response Amendment Act of 2020:
    - 1. Affects the Commission in that it does change the definition of public accommodation.
      - a. Clarifies that hatred doesn't have to be the sole factor in an assault, it can be a motivating factor, for instance.
      - b. Chair Aizawa asked whether there has been any discussion about hospitals serving as public accommodations?
        - i. Director Palacio stated the Office can look into this.
    - ii. Pending before City Council is the Criminal Record Accuracy Assurance Act of 2021, which prohibits companies that report criminal background information from releasing expunged/sealed information.
    - iii. *Fulton v. City of Philadelphia* (Supreme Court case)
      - 1. City of Philadelphia barred Catholic Social Services (CSS) from placing children in foster homes because of the agency's policy of not licensing same-sex couples to be foster parents.

## **X. OLD BUSINESS**

- **Commission on Human Rights**
  - Chief Judge Pierson shared that four new cases had been certified to the Commission since the last meeting.
  
- **Commission on Human Rights' Committees**
  - **Rules Committee:**
    - Chair Simpson shared that the Committee was set to meet last week, but is in the process of rescheduling their meeting.
    - The Committee will continue to work on revisions to Chapter 4, Title 4.
  - **Awards Committee:**
    - Commissioner Collinson (former Chair) shared that the Committee is in the process of scheduling time to meet.
    - Commissioner Collinson asked that another Commissioner consider serving as Chair given, among other things, demands from her new job.
      - Chair Aizawa agreed to serve as Acting Chair.
  - **Outreach Committee:**
    - Chair Mulhauser shared that the Committee is looking to meet soon.

## **XI. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING**

- Chair Aizawa adjourned the meeting at 7:51 PM.