

**MARION CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
May 1st, 2019, 6:30 pm**

Marion City Hall
1225 6th Avenue
Marion, IA 52302

Commissioners Present: Dave Baumler
Selita Jansen
Chris Stoner
Frederick Brown
Kent Jackson
Bret Nilles
Kim Gordon
Jennifer Tibbets
Renaë Forsyth-Christy
Danielle Brazant

Commissioners Absent:

Okpara Rice

Staff/Other Present: Amal Eltahir, City of Marion
Janet Abejo-Parker, CR Interim Executive Director

- I. **Call to Order**
Noting there was a quorum, Commissioner Nilles, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:32pm.
- II. **Roll Call/Introductions**
Commissioners and staff introduced themselves.
- III. **Public Response**
There was no public response.
- IV. **Director's Report**
The Interim Director presented her report in a new format which included more case details noting she welcomes the commissioner's feedback. She mentioned that reasonable accommodations is the top complaint so far and that the frequency of sexual harassment cases is trending upward nationally. Interim Director will share more national information, if commissioners are interested. She also stated that the annual report addresses Marion's case statistics as percentages, responding to Commissioner Baumler's inquiry. Commissioner Nilles stated information will be helpful in directing outreach and training efforts.

Interim Director shared news about Cedar Rapids hiring a full-time investigator. Regarding the Executive Director position, the city hired Baker Tilly as a recruiting consultant. Recruiting process will take 90 to 120 days.

Outreach information included:

- Fair housing month poster contest
- Public service announcement focusing on sexual harassment in housing.
- City bus internal adds on fair housing and sexual harassment
- Bus Shelters adds for a year
- Summer events

V. **Approval of Minutes from March Meeting**

Commissioner Baumler moved to approve the April minutes as presented. Seconded by Commissioner Tibbets, the motion passed unanimously.

VI. **Report from Chair**

Commissioner Nilles noted the commission's 5-year anniversary and the MCRC strategic plan emphasizing planning for a year ahead and focusing on communicating more to the community to raise awareness.

VII. **Committee Reports**

Executive Committee

Commissioner Gordon stated that the agenda was planned and discussed during the meeting the strategic plan and celebrating the 5-year anniversary.

Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission Liaison

Commissioner Forsyth-Christy attended CR Fair housing commission meeting. She mentioned a speaker from Waypoint was there to talk about homelessness in the county and a tenant academy services that is available through them. The speaker also highlighted that top barriers to housing are affordability, credit history, and criminal history.

VIII. **Old Business**

a. Briefings:

i. Linn-Mar Diversity Fair

Commissioner Jackson described the event as successful, diverse and very interesting.

ii. Crime-free Housing Seminar: Service Animal & Lawful Source of Income-

Commissioner Gordon shared her presentation slides mentioning that she called for screening practices not discourage legal behavior and answered questions clarifying misconceptions regarding stigmatized lawful sources of incomes such as fixed-income and section 8.

b. Strategic Plan Update

Commissioners Brown, Rice, and Jackson and Eltahir met on the 19th to update the plan. In general, organized the text and removed redundancies. Commissioner Brown suggested using the editorial calendar to plan events/topics ahead for each quarter. Commissioners will have up to the June meeting to review the plan and come up with ideas, as the plan is to take effect on July 1st.

- c. MCRC 5-year Anniversary
Commissioner Nilles commented that as the city is growing, the commission's responsibility and focus continues to be outreach.
Commissioners brainstormed speakers' ideas. Topics included sexual harassment in housing and employment, mental health awareness, and community services.
Commissioner Brown suggested adopting a slogan for the upcoming year. The Commission will consult with the city's communication manager regarding ideas and design.

IX. **New Business**

- a. Upcoming Community Events
 - i. ***Juneteenth*** –Viola Gibson Park on June 15th, 10-4 pm commissioners Brown & Forsyth-Christy will be presenting representing the commission.
 - ii. ***Marion Library Pride Event***- June 22nd
 - iii. ***CR PrideFest- NewBo City market on July 6, 11 -4 pm***. Commissioners Jackson & Baumler will represent the commission.

5-year anniversary proclamation- Commissioner Tibbets will accept proclamation on behalf of the commission.

X. **Good of the Order**

- a. Outreach- Commissioner Tibbets suggested asking the Iowa department of human rights to bring speakers.

Commissioner Gordon announced she will be administering a rent assistance program that was expanded to include Marion and Hiawatha's households. The program is intended as gap funding and is targeting burdened disabled households who are in the process of getting longer term assistance such as social security or section 8. Assistance will be provided for up to 12 months.

XI. **Adjournment**

Commissioner Nilles motioned to adjourn the meeting. Moved by Commissioner Jackson, Seconded by Commissioner Gordon, the meeting adjourned at 7:37 pm.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, June 5th, 2019 at 6:30 pm at Marion City Hall, 1225 6th Avenue, Marion, Iowa.

Respectfully submitted by Amal Eltabir, City of Marion