

**MARION CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION
REGULAR AGENDA**

Wednesday March 3rd, 2021, 6:30 pm

Location: Zoom Webinar ID: 859 5333 3504

NOTE: Based on COVID-19 guidance from CDC, Linn County Public Health, and the State of Iowa to limit the size of groups gathering, this meeting is virtual. Link to the meeting is: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85953333504>

**Anyone who wishes to comment on an agenda item may submit the question or comment during the Zoom meeting by clicking the Q&A option and entering comment.
All comments will be acknowledged during the meeting.**

- I. Call to Order
- II. Roll Call
- III. Public Response
- IV. Director's Report
- V. Approval of Minutes
- VI. Report from Chair
- VII. Reports:
 - a. Executive Committee -- Commissioner Brown
 - b. Cedar Rapids Liaison Report --Commissioner Forsyth-Christy
 - c. Communication and outreach Committee—Commissioner Jensen
- VIII. Unfinished Business
 - a. Community Equity Taskforce
 - b. Marion Low Income Housing Assistance Grant
- IX. New business
 - a. Public Statements
 - b. Lawful Source of Income
- X. Good of the Order
- XI. Adjournment

NOTICE:

Any visually impaired or hearing-impaired person needing assistance to participate in this meeting should contact Marion Civil Rights at 319-743-6301 at least 48 hours prior to the meeting.

Marion Civil Rights Commission * 319-743-6301 * www.cityofmarion.org/departments/city-clerk/boards-commissions/civil-rights-commission

MARION CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday January 6th, 2020, 6:30 pm
Location: Zoom Webinar ID: 897 8156 8601

Commissioners Present:

Frederick Brown
Jenifer Tibbets
Bret Nilles
Chris Stoner
Okpara Rice
Kent Jackson
Dave Baulmer
Selita Jansen
Angelica Vannatta
Danielle Brazant
Renaë Forsyth-Christy

Commissioners Absent:

Staff/Other Present:

Amal Eltahir, City of Marion

Ana Clymer
Kara Bullerman, City Attorney

- I. **Call to Order**
Noting there was a quorum, Commissioner Jackson, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.
- II. **Roll Call/Introductions**
Commissioners and staff introduced themselves.
- III. **Ethics Policy- Kara Bullerman, City Attorney**
Raising awareness and advising on how to navigate the fine line between expressing personal opinion and representing official capacity, Bullerman talked about ethics and the expectations from those with an official role focusing on public meetings and forums settings.
Regarding Zoom behavior, Bullerman advised on being conscious of ones surroundings. Regarding Political statements, she cautioned commissioners recommending being mindful of what might cause controversy and highlighting the importance of maintaining neutrality, especially as civil rights commissioners.

IV. **Public Response**

None

V. **Director's Report**

No intake was reported for January 2021.

VI. **Approval of Minutes**

Commissioner Nilles moved to approve the January minutes as presented. Seconded by Commissioner Forsyth-Christy, motion passed.

VII. **Report from Chair**

Commissioner Jackson participated in and spoke highly of the Equity Conversation sessions led by United Way.

VIII. **Committee Reports**

- a. *Executive Committee*- Commissioners met on January 25th to set the agenda. The Committee discussed Community Equity Taskforce and the LMI Housing Assistance Grant.
- b. *Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission Liaison* - Renae Forsyth-Christy
No Report
- c. *Communication and outreach Committee* -Commissioner Stoner
Commissioner Vannatta will be participating on the subcommittee. Commissioner Jensen is looking for feedback and input from the Commission regarding the framework of the outreach plan. Commissioners previously discussed the need for revamping the events calendar plan and distribution channels. Committee sees the opportunity in leveraging technology to make up for COVID Impact on outreach.

IX. **Unfinished Business**

- a. Community Equity Taskforce

Commissioners Brown briefed the commission stating that the taskforce met on January 14th. Agenda included two presentations regarding police response data and the Equity Survey results. Great discussion regarding policy that will be continued next meeting and potential targeted focus groups, a civil Rights Commission idea, that resonated well with the group.

- b. **Marion Low Income Housing Assistance Grant**

Commissioners Brown stated that application deadline is February 12th. Committee received a report from Willis Dady regarding last year's grant.

- c. Events planning

Consensus is: There is a need for raising awareness around discrimination, civil rights content, and the Marion Civil Rights commission. Commissioners brainstormed outreach ideas and discussed with great interest virtual speakers and other engagement series, heavy visibility, leading the equity conversation, and social media presence.

X. **Good of the Order**

Commissioners Brazant shared she had a speaking opportunity to talk about mental health with Steve Mossier.

Ana Clymer wrote asking about whether the city has an ethics training for boards and commissions to eliminate bias. Vannatta underlined the question regarding history and bias training. Eltahir described the city's expectations, screening, and onboarding process and that the onboarding process include general awareness and could be improved with civil rights training.

XI. **Adjournment**

Commissioner Rice moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Brazant, the meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm.

Marion Civil Rights Commission (MCRC)

Executive Director's Report

March 3, 2021

OFFICE/STAFF UPDATES

- Staff continues to work from home due to COVID-19.
- We welcome Alma Apolonio Bernal, Social Work student from Mt. Mercy University!

OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

- **Strategic Community Engagement**
 - We continue to listen to our community and offer opportunities for engagement on current issues and concerns. The community has responded strongly to our events thus far, and we need to keep the momentum going. We are working to plan an event each month for the next several months to keep the interest sparked.
- **Executive Director speaking engagements/media since February Commission Meeting**
 - Presentation to United Way, Workplace Volunteer Council
 - Understanding our Biases training, Tanager Place Leadership Academy
 - Gazette article about our *Equity Conversations: Creating a Community of Belonging*, Focus: Equity and Education. Dr. White was a prominent feature of this article written by education reporter, Grace King. (Article in packet)
 - KWWL coverage of *Equity Conversations: Creating a Community of Belonging*, Focus: Equity and Financial Stability. (Article in packet)
- **Equity Conversations – Creating a Community of Belonging Series**
 - Educational series as a partnership with the United Way of East Central Iowa
 - February 2, equity and education (110 participants)
 - February 9, equity and financial stability (97 participants)
 - February 16, equity and health (70 participants)
 - February 23, next steps (70 participants)
 - Working on “Lessons Learned” with presenters.
- **Women's History Month**
 - CRCRC is conducting a Toiletry and Hygiene Drive the last two weeks of March to benefit Women's Services at Catherine McAuley Center.
- **Art Contest for Youth**
 - **Theme:** *Home and Belonging: What Home Means To Me*
 - **Eligibility:** Contest open to all K-12 grade students who attend Cedar Rapids area schools, including students who are not US citizens and those who are homeschooled. Immediate family and/or members of the households of judges, Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commissioners and employees are ineligible to participate.
 - **Key Dates:**
 - Now - March 31: Communication with stakeholders
 - April 1: All submissions due
 - April 8: Judge Spoken Word and Written Word (grades 9-12)
 - April 15: Judge Posters (grades K-2, 3-5, 6-8)
 - April 21: Announce winners during virtual Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission meeting

HUD UPDATES

- **HUD Partnership Grant, received \$10,000**

- *Know Your Rights Videos*: Production of 6 videos in multiple languages, including French, Spanish, Swahili, Lingala, Kirundi, and English. Videos will explain basic fair housing rights, how to file a civil rights complaint, and examples of discrimination. (Release in April for Fair Housing Month)
- *Storytelling Videos*: Production of at least 5 short videos of immigrants and refugees sharing their experiences living in our community. (Release in June for World Refugee Day)
- Partnership with Catherine McAuley Center
- RFP completed, and contract awarded to Flow Media

- **Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation**

- In response to President Biden's Executive Order 13988, issued on January 20, 2021, Jeanine Worden, Acting Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing & Equal Opportunity, released a memo on February 11, 2021 stating effective immediately, FHEO (HUD) shall accept for filing and investigate all complaints of sex discrimination, including discrimination because on gender identity or sexual orientation.
- This is now a Federal protection for LGBTQIA+ people and this covers all housing transactions: renting, mortgages, insurance, access to shelters, etc.
- Cedar Rapids/Marion already has gender identity and sexual orientation as protected classes; however, we were required to file an addendum to our agreement with HUD stating specifically that discrimination based on sex includes sexual orientation and gender identity. Addendum has been completed and submitted to HUD.

COMMISSIONER AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

- March: Senior Investigator Janet Abejo-Parker will present about mediation, conciliation, and peace circles at the March 17, 2021 Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission meeting.
- April: Executive Director Stefanie Munsterman-Scriven will present information about Lawful Source of Income to the Marion Civil Rights Commission
 - April is Fair Housing Month and Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

INTAKES/INQUIRIES

- List of received intakes, calls, emails, or walk-ins from January 2020 to present included in meeting packet.
- If an inquiry is not a discrimination matter, staff refers the individual to appropriate agencies for assistance.

Respectfully,
Stefanie Munsterman-Scriven
Executive Director

Images of Ruth White, Eric Thompson, John Tursi, and two images of last summer's protests were at the top

Schools must teach 'ugly wounds' of Black history to work toward equity, Iowa panel says

Eastern Iowa panelists talk about equity and education for a Black History Month seminar

CEDAR RAPIDS — Schools need to teach the “ugly wounds” of American history — including racial injustice and systemic racism — to better work toward equity.

That was the message put forth during an online panel hosted this week by the Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission and United Way of East Central Iowa in honor of Black History Month.

“We have to know our history in order to move forward as a country,” said Ruth White, founder and executive director of the Academy for Scholastic and Personal Success and chairwoman of the Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission.

We have to know the history of the people who made this country, and the people who made this country look like me.”

Speaking on a panel about equity and education, White advocated for teaching and celebrating Black history — not just slavery and the civil rights movement — to all students so they can understand the “value of our heritage.”

Her Academy for Scholastic and Personal Success is a six-week summer program in Cedar Rapids for Black students to learn about Black history, literature, math and science and a post-secondary seminar to help prepare them for college.

Tuesday’s panel discussion was the first in a series of equity conversations planned for Black History Month. The free online events will take place each Tuesday in February from 6:30 to 8 p.m.

The purpose of the series is to build awareness and understanding around equity within the areas of education, financial stability and health.

During Tuesday’s education-themed discussion, the other panelists were Eric Thompson, director of the Academy for Scholastic and Personal Success, and John Tursi, executive director of the Boys and Girls Club of the Corridor.

The panelists addressed the 1619 Project, a New York Times initiative that looks at the role of slavery, discrimination and white supremacy in American history.

Rep. Skyler Wheeler, R-Orange City, has sponsored a bill in the Iowa Legislature to ban schools, community colleges and state universities from using any history curriculum obtained from the 1619 Project.

But both White and Thompson agreed that the project should be taught in the state’s schools.

“The 1619 Project is straight fact,” Thompson said.

“If we don’t start at the beginning and learn our history and do that work, we will continually make the same mistakes,” White added.

White said when she was in school, she learned about Black people through the eyes of white authors such as Mark Twain and William Faulkner.

She said she wasn’t taught about anyone in history or literature who was Black until she started her Ph.D. program at the University of Iowa in American studies with an emphasis in African-American history and literature.

“That was my ah-ha moment,” she said. “I knew we had done great things, but I didn’t see it in my education.”

White continued her education and earned her Ph.D. because she was “looking for herself,” she recalled.

White said Black students don’t see themselves reflected in the education system because they are not taught about Black history and don’t have educators who look like and understand them.

Twenty percent of non-white students don't graduate from high school in Linn County, compared with only 9 percent of their white peers, Tursi said.

"Clearly there is a disparity that needs to be addressed," he said.

The Career Academy, which is part of the Boys and Girls Club in Marion, aims to improve graduation rates by showing children potential career paths.

Fifth- through eighth-grade students in the Career Academy visit at least 40 companies in Eastern Iowa that pay well and have jobs available.

"The goal is to show kids opportunity so they have a reason to graduate high school. That starts in middle school, before they even get to high school, so they can see there's something for them," Tursi said.

Reflecting on the disadvantages still facing students of color, Thompson noted that Black, brown, biracial and Native Americans were banned from public schools from 1647 to 1865. Any learning that happened was at night or in a small setting.

America has not been the "land of the free" for Black and biracial Americans, Thompson said.

He noted that it wasn't until 1954 that segregating schools became illegal, but schools weren't given a timeline on when desegregation must occur.

So, he said, "You have hundreds of years of segregation, lack of equity, lack of equality and poor health care."

Comments: (319) 398-8411; grace.king@thegazette.com

- What: Black History Month series hosted by the Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission and United Way of East Central Iowa
- When: Tuesdays in February from 6:30 to 8 p.m.
- Where: Online via Zoom
- To register: Go to <https://www.uweci.org/events-blog/event/equity-conversation-series/>.

'We are here to help one another grow' Black History Month Equity Series continues

CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa (KWWL) - Tuesday marked the second series of talks on equity hosted by the Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission and the United Way of East Central Iowa.

The Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission and the United Way of East Central Iowa are partnering to host a series of equity conversations every Tuesday evening in February.

The purpose of the series is to build awareness and understanding around equity within the areas of education, financial stability, and health.

Tuesday's talk spoke on actionable items people can do to reduce financial inequity. Along with CRCRC and UWECI's partnership and nonprofit agencies working to address inequities.

Moderators included, Stefanie Munsterman-Scriven, Executive Director of the Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission, and Angelica Vannatta, Senior Manager, Volunteer Engagement of the United Way of East Central Iowa.

One of the exercises in the series included a budget simulation as a single mom, who is living in poverty within Linn County.

Sofia DeMartino with Horizons Family Service Alliance, highlighted barriers within affordable housing.

"When you're a renter you are at the liberty of what they have chosen to put in place for you. Along with the home you can afford. Hopefully it's accessible to the places that you need to be like school, work and childcare," DeMartino said. Catherine McAuley Center in Cedar Rapids discussed their mission and goals to help immigrants, refugees and women in crisis.

Executive Director, Paula Land, says needed stability lies within housing due to the derecho.

"Many affordable housing units were destroyed, and still in need for repair," Land said.

The actionable steps all parties mentioned was the act of job hunting training. Willis Dady Shelter's Denine Rushing, Rushing and her team offer training for their clients.

"Even though some of these interviews may be on zoom, we are still being able to provide those tools to these clients that are navigating the journey of obtaining employment," Rushing said.

Breakout groups spoke on the information given during the series. Groups also discussed certain policies in their opinion that could help remove multiple barriers disproportionately impact women and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color).

Certain policies included:

- Health Care
- Child Care
- Education on choice of career
- Moderation use of credit checks

The next series will be Feb. 16, the topic will focus on Equity and Health.

Vinny Lowerre

Producer & Multimedia Journalist

Marion Intakes/Inquiries Received Since February 1, 2021				
Complaints were referred to the Iowa Civil Rights Commission, HUD, or another agency				
	Date	Area	Basis	Details
1	January 2, 2020	Education	Race	Child being harrassed, followed, and "grabbed" by teachers
2	February 11, 2020	Housing	Association, Mental Disability, Physical Disability, Sex, National Origin	Feels harassed regarding emotional support animal, such as receiving notices regarding barking; feels landlord is mointoring her unit, activities, and guests; getting in trouble for smoking when males don't
3	April 23, 2020	Housing	Race	Landlord accusing tenant of dealing drugs from unit because of numerous visitors. Visitors are bringing supplies/food due to COVID-19. Landlord threatened to report tenant to Leased Housing if visitors continue
4	May 4, 2020	Housing	Physical Disability	Landlord requiring tenant to pay for accessible parking sign and indicating parking space cannot be located near the entrance, but would need to be 10 spaces away
5	May 4, 2020	Housing	N/A	Tenant is having issues with a "nuisance neighbor" and landlord will not do anything about it
6	June 5, 2020	Public Accommodation	Race	Differential treatment of children based on race
7	June 26, 2020	Employment	Race	Differential treatment based on race
8	July 14, 2020	Housing	N/A	Tenant is having issues with a neighbor and indicated the HOA will not do anything. No protected class. Referred for legal advice
9	November 20, 2020	Housing	Disability/ESA	Tenant states she was denied her ESA by her HOA. She will officially request the ESA and follow up with our office with the results
10	December 31, 2020	Public Accommodation	N/A	Caller stated she felt discriminated against but did not indicate protected class or basis of discrimination.