

**WASHINGTON STATE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
OCTOBER 28, 2021 AT 8:00AM
CONFERENCE CALL**

ATTENDANCE

Commissioners: Deborah Cook, Jeff Sbaih, and James Mohr.

Staff: Sharon, Ortiz, Executive Director; Cheryl Strobert, Deputy Director; Sharon James, Assistant Attorney General; Kristin Lamson, Assistant Attorney General; Jerry Lee, Operations Manager; and Selene Garcia, Customer Service Specialist 2

Public Guest: Marguerite Richard

OPENING AND WELCOME

Chair Cook chaired the meeting and called the meeting to order at 8:00A.M.

MEETING MINUTES

The September 23, 2021 Minutes were reviewed and approved.

Commissioner Sbaih motioned to approve the Minutes. Commissioner Mohr seconded the motion.

CASE CLOSURES

Commissioner Sbaih motioned to approve the cases for closure. Commissioner Mohr seconded the motion and the motion was carried.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORTING

Executive Director Ortiz stated that the agency received a large number of inquiries and complaints regarding Governor Inslee's vaccine mandate. Following legal advice, it has been determined that it is a direct conflict of interest for the agency to take the complaints, since the agency is under the same mandate and the Governor appoints the commissioners. The agency will not be taking complaints related to the vaccine mandate and are referring such cases to their unions and other civil rights agencies.

In the month of October, there was a significant increase in intake inquiries and phone calls related to the vaccine mandate. The majority were asking about religious exemptions.

Director Ortiz stated that we started a partnership grant with Fair Housing Alliance and Fair housing Center of Washington. They will be doing testing based on protected class and creating radio Public Service Announcements for the agency.

The agency met the requirements of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) contract. Three hundred and twenty-four cases were closed during this contract year. Our next task is to complete a Request for Information for the next contract year.

Another positive note is that Ramon Alvarez, a former investigator, has returned to the agency to help with the backlog of cases and is already working on cases.

Director Ortiz supervised the intake unit while Operations Manager Jerry Lee was on leave. A case involving multiple victims was transferred to Attorney General's Office for further investigation and possible prosecution.

RECRUITMENT FOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Chair Cook and Director Ortiz have been working with the Department of Enterprise Services (DES) to begin the recruitment process to fill the executive director position once Director Ortiz retires. The job announcement has been posted. However, the job description needs to be ratified. Director Ortiz and Chair Cook would like to extend the closure date for recruitment so that there is a larger pool of applicants for consideration.

Following a motion by Commissioner Mohr and seconded by Commissioner Sbaih, the date to received applications for the executive director position was extended until November 9, 2021.

COMMISSIONER REPORTING

Commissioner Cook has been working with the Washington Council of the Blind and other disability advocacy groups regarding accessible prescription labeling as part of the requirements of RCW 49.60. She met with the Office of Equity to discuss whether the agencies could partner on this endeavor.

AAG UPDATE

Assistant Attorney General Kristin Lamson has joined the Attorney General's Office and will be transitioning in January to be our primary advice AAG.

Assistant Attorney General James met with the Civil Rights Division and wanted to report that in August a housing case was settled after the complainant elected to take the case to Superior Court. Prior to the hearing, the parties were able to come to an agreement with the landlord.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Marguerite Richard provided comment to the Commissioners regarding concerns that she has regarding the investigative process involving a case.

2021 COMMISSION MEETING SCHEDULE

November 18, 2021: Via Conference Call

December 16, 2021: Via Conference Call

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:38A.M.

Respectfully submitted by,
Selene Garcia