

**STATE OF ILLINOIS
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**

Meeting of the Commission
April 30, 2014
10:00 a.m.

James R. Thompson Center
Murdock Room - IDHS
Suite 5-300
100 West Randolph Street
Chicago, IL 60601

and

Lincoln Land Training Center
130 W. Mason Street
Room 104
Springfield, Illinois

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Commissioners

In Chicago

Chairman Martin R. Castro
Robert A. Cantone
David Chang
Brad Cole
Terry Cosgrove
Merri Dee
Nabi Fakroddin
Lauren Beth Gash
Rozanne Ronen
Diane M. Viverito
Patricia Bakalis Yadgir

In Springfield

Marti Baricevic (Via telephone)
David J. Walsh (Via interactive videoconferencing)

Absent

None

Staff

LaNade Bridges
N. Keith Chambers
Dr. Ewa Ewa

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Mike Evans
Reva Bauch
Donyelle L. Gray
Evelio Mora
Christine M. Welninski
Byron Wardlaw

Members of Public: None

NOTICE:

Public and closed meetings of the Illinois Human Rights Commission are audio recorded.

I. Call to Order

On April 30, 2014 at 10:06 a.m., Chairman Castro called to order a meeting of the Illinois Human Rights Commission.

Pursuant to the Illinois Open Meetings Act, 5 ILCS 120/1 et seq., it was determined that:

- 1) A quorum of the public body was present at the meeting. Prior to the meeting, Commissioner Baricevic gave notice to the General Counsel and Secretary of the Public Body, Donyelle Gray that she would not be physically present for the meeting and requested to participate via telephone. A motion to allow Commissioner Baricevic to participate via telephone was made by Commissioner Cosgrove and seconded by Commissioner Ronen. Motion carried 12-0.

II. Consideration of Minutes

March 26, 2014

The Commission voted to approve the minutes of the March 26, 2014 as amended: **1)** Part IV, replace “The proposed protocol will entail...” with “The proposed formal protocol may entail”; #5 replace “outreach committee should take a proactive approach to conduct four to six events per year” with “The Commission is encouraged to take a proactive approach to participate in outreach activities”; and **2)** Delete the word “to” in the Part V line five. Motion to approve the minutes of March 26, 2014 as amended made by Commissioner and seconded by Commissioner Nabi. Motion carried 12 in favor, with one abstention by Chairman Castro.

III. Chairman's Report

Martin R. Castro, Chairman

Chairman Castro reported that he attended the House and Senate appropriation committees meetings in Chicago and Springfield. Chairman Castro reported that the Committees are seeking a 16% cut in the HRC and other agency budgets. Chairman Castro further reported that he gave testimony before the Committees on the impact of a 16% budget cut, i.e., that such a cut would be devastating to the Commission.

IV. Staff Reports

A. *N. Keith Chambers, Executive Director*

Mr. Chambers reported that a 16% – 20% would be devastating to the HRC. The budget cuts would require staff layoffs. However, at this point in time nothing is for sure as to the proposed budget cuts.

Mr. Chambers reported on the Status of SB 3099, Access to Government Services. Mr. Chambers reported that SB 3099 is still pending in committee.

Mr. Chambers reported on that there is a new Bill that was passed in the House and is now before the Senate. The Bill is a Pregnancy Accommodation Bill and it would amend the Illinois Human Rights Act by adding a new protected class.

B. *Dr. Ewa I. Ewa, Chief Fiscal Officer*

Dr. Ewa reported on the 16%-20% purposed budget cut. Dr. Ewa informed the Commission that this budget cut would reduce the Commission's staff by 3-4 persons.

Dr. Ewa reported that the Illinois Torture Inquiry Commission will also be losing two staff members if the proposed budget cut is implemented, bringing them down to 1 staff member.

C. *Michael J. Evans, Chief Administrative Law Judge*

Chief Administrative Law Evans gave the report for the Chief Administrative Law Judge for the month of March 2014. Judge Evans reported that the number of complaint filings continues to go down. Judge Evans reported that the number of filings may be going down due to complainants choosing to file their lawsuits in the Circuit Court.

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D. Donyelle Gray, General Counsel

Ms. Gray gave general reminders to the Commission regarding Statement of Economic Interest filing requirements and deadlines, timesheets, and Annual Ethics Training for State Appointees.

Ms. Gray reported that Commissioner Cosgrove along with Assistant General Counsel Wardlaw were panelists at an event held April 26, 2014 held at the Center on Halsted, called “Pride of Ownership.” The purpose of the event was to provide legal and other information related to real estate transaction to the LGBT community. In addition, Chairman Castro, and Commissioner Gash attended the event. The event was very well-attended and Commissioner Cosgrove and AGC Wardlaw represented the Commission very well.

V. Old Business

Ms. Gray then commenced discussion of the Commissioners’ Travel Reimbursement Policy, which was tabled at the March *en banc* due to the Chairman’s absence. Ms. Gray gave a synopsis of the current Policy and an overview of the materials previously provided to the Commissioners, as well as provided some background on what she believed led to implementation of the current Policy.

Ms. Gray explained that since approximately 2002, the Commission had been applying the rules of the Travel Regulation Council to determine what costs the Commissioners were entitled to for travel to and from Commission meetings. Previous Commission leadership developed the current Policy, “the Illinois Human Rights Commission Travel Guidelines”. This Policy included designation of “headquarters” for Commissioners as either being in Chicago or Springfield, according to which Commission office the Commissioner lived closer to. As such, Commissioners who were “Springfield-based” would be reimbursed for travel from the Springfield office to another location where they were to perform their official function (such as attendance at a Commission meeting in Chicago). However, the Springfield-based Commissioner would not be reimbursed for travel from his or her home to Springfield for official business. The same applied regarding Chicago-based Commissioners for travel in or near Chicago.

Ms. Gray explained that recent reimbursement issues have arisen regarding the current Policy, and in particular regarding the propriety of “head-quartering” Commissioners so as to provide limitations on reimbursement for travel. Ms. Gray indicated that the Commission could decide whether or not it wished to change the Policy.

Thereafter, the Chairman opened the floor to a discussion of the issues presented. Discussion was had regarding the nature of Policy and the economic impact it would have on the Commission to change the Policy at this time. Most Commissioners indicated that they did not believe it was fiscally prudent to change the Policy at this time, since the reimbursements would come from the Commission’s budget, and the Commission was already facing a potential budget cut.

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A motion to maintain the Policy “as is” was made by Chairman Castro, seconded by Commissioner Yadgir. A vote by roll call was taken.

Commissioners who voted In Favor of the Motion:

1. Chairman Castro;
2. Commissioner Ronen;
3. Commissioner Viverito;
4. Commissioner Baricevic;
5. Commissioner Chang;
6. Commissioner Nabi;
7. Commissioner Yadgir;
8. Commissioner Cosgrove;
9. Commissioner Dee;
10. Commissioner Cantone;
11. Commissioner Gash;
12. Commissioner Walsh

Commissioners who Opposed the Motion

1. None

Commissioners Who Abstained

1. Commissioner Brad Cole

Therefore, the Motion passed with 12 in favor, and 1 abstention. The current Policy will remain in full force and effect.

VI. New Business

A. Outreach Committee Report

Commissioner Gash gave a report on activities of the Outreach Committee, and reported that the Committee had met one hour prior to the *en banc* meeting.

Commissioner Gash reported that Center on Halsted event went very well and that Commissioner Cosgrove and Assistant General Counsel Wardlaw had represented the Commission well.

Commissioner Gash further spoke on the need for the Commission to be more visible in the community. During the Outreach Committee meeting several suggestions were made to that end, such as: Public Service Announcements (“PSAs”), especially in areas outside of Chicago and downstate where residents may have not have as much access to information about the Commission and their rights under Human Rights Act; changes to the Commission website to indicate that Commission Commissioners and/or staff

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were available to speak to the community about the Human Rights Act and the Commission; translating the Commission brochure into several languages; Commissioners always carrying brochures about the Commission to have available to distribute when appropriate; and doing direct outreach to legislators to ensure they remained well-informed of the Commission's functions and activities.

VII. Public Comment

None.

VIII. Executive Session

None.

IX. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m. Motion made by Chairman Castro, seconded by Commissioner Nabi. Motion carried 13-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Donyelle L. Gray
General Counsel