



Human Rights Commission
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**DRAFT VERMONT HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
MINUTES
July 25, 2024**

PRESENT: Commissioners: Kevin **CHRISTIE**, Chair; Nathan **BESIO**; Joan **NAGY**; Bruce **WILSON** (remotely) appeared at 9:28 a.m.

ABSENT: Dawn **ELLIS** (no communication received).

Staff: Big Hartman, Executive Director & General Counsel (“**ED**”); Mitch Rotbert, Senior Counsel (minutes).

Attorney Investigator Daniel Flynnjac (“**Flynjac**”) entered the meeting remotely at 9:50 a.m.

CHRISTIE called the meeting to order at 9:18 a.m.

BUSINESS MEETING

At 9:16 a.m., **NAGY** moved to accept as written the minutes of the Commission meeting held June 27, 2024. **BESIO** seconded. **Unanimous vote on the motion (3-0)**.

Executive Director Report

At 9:20 a.m., **ED** commenced their report to the Commissioners. **ED** reported that the Commission’s caseload has resulted in overworked staff, and critical staff having to take leave or resign. **ED** proposes that the only solution is to increase staff. Taking fewer cases is not a realistic option because Vermonters in protected classes have no other real recourse. Funding from HUD is likely to increase, provided that staff processes not fewer than three housing cases dual-filed with HUD per month. **ED** explained how the HUD payments to the Commission operate. Currently, new non-housing cases are not being assigned an investigator due to caseload levels, and are pending with the **ED** serving as point person for those cases.

ED presented strategy to have staff, and Commissioners, focus in the next legislative session solely on increasing funding for the Commission. **ED** advised that the budget for the Commission needs to double. **ED** suggested that we come to the next session with data from parties to Commission cases for presentation to the legislature, including testimony from parties who were dissatisfied with speed or other aspects of resolution through staff efforts. **CHRISTIE** outlined various approaches to work with the legislators to bring the Commission to the financial stability

it requires to perform adequately. **NAGY** discussed the importance of individuals who have had cases with us telling their stories to the legislature.

ED reported having received 43 applications for the Executive Assistant position. **ED** hopes to have hired a Executive Assistant in August.

EXECUIVE SESSION

At 9:52 a.m. **NAGY** moved to go into executive session to discuss confidential cases. **BESIO** seconded. **Unanimous vote in favor (4-0).**

At 10: 38 a.m., **CHRISTIE** took the Commission out of Executive Session.

BUSINESS MEETING

In HRC Case No. HV24-0016, HUD Case No. 01-24-4635-8, **NAGY** moved the Commission to determine there **are not** reasonable grounds to believe that Respondent discriminated against the Complainant based on disability in violation of the Vermont Fair Housing and Public Accommodations Act, 9 V.S.A § 4503. **BESIO** seconded. **Unanimous vote in favor of the motion (4-0).**

At 10:40 a.m., **Flynjac** was excused.

At 10:42 a.m., **ED** commenced a discussion on recent PCDA's. **ED** explained the written PDCA resolving the matter in HV24-0008. Commission voted unanimously to approve the PDCA. **ED** reported a settlement reached through mediation on July 22, 2024, in HRC Case No.: E23-0002; written settlement agreement to follow.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 10:47 a.m., **NAGY** moved to go into executive session to discuss matters about which premature general public knowledge would clearly place the HRC at substantial disadvantage. **BESIO** seconded. **Unanimous vote in favor of the motion (4-0).**

BUSINESS SESSION

At 11:20 a.m., **CHRISTIE** took the Commission out of executive session for the purpose of discussing matters about which premature general public knowledge would clearly place the HRC at substantial disadvantage.

Executive Director Report (cont'd)

ED commenced a discussion on the Commission's new "plain language" brochure outlining the Commission's processes and rules.

ED continued discussion about the need for resources that the Commission requires to give effect to its mission, including hiring an in-house social worker and a mediator. **ED** is experimenting with using mediation at the outset of complaint.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:15 p.m.

NEXT MEETING Thursday, August 22, 2024.

Dated at Montpelier, Vermont, this day 25th day of July 2024.

Respectfully submitted:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Big", written in black ink. The signature is positioned above a horizontal line.

Big Hartman
Executive Director