

Office of Civil Rights & Wage Enforcement
Community Relations Commission
Public Session Minutes
February 21, 2018

Participating in the meeting were Commissioners Rev. Todd Yeary (Chair), Stephen Ruckman, Adote Akwei, and via conference call: Phillip Farfel and Sarah Heaton. Also present were Jill P. Carter, Director, Charles Byrd, Deputy Director, Raemond Parrott, Troy Pumphrey, Gregory Logan. The meeting was called to order at 8:50 a.m.

I. Welcome

II. Approval of the Minutes

December 20, 2017 minutes were approved as submitted.

III. Commissioners' Report

Commissioner Heaton asked the Commission to talk about the negative effects about Ban-the-Box. Rev. Yeary asked Director Carter to comment on the affects.

Director Carter stated that CRC has not done enough outreach to determine the effects of Ban-the-Box, but she has met with City Council President and Councilwoman Shannon Sneed about how to perfect the law.

Director Carter anticipates opportunities in the future regarding:

- Education outreach on the current law
- Surveys
- Letters of notification to employers
- Outreach to other organizations

Director Carter also asked new CRC Supervisor Raemond Parrott to comment on potential legislative changes. Mr. Parrott spoke about his research on Ban-the-Box in Howard County. He cautioned that the studies may be politically focused and that the Commission should be cognizant of the sources of information. He has found similar statistics (for example) that say that affirmative action may actually harm African Americans. He has seen improvements on the West Coast in terms of job opportunities and individuals as a whole but not necessarily in terms of race.

Rev. Yeary asked about the comparison with other states on the drafting of Ban-the-Box laws and the tracking of data. Mr. Parrott spoke about an article in the Baltimore Sun concerning Ban-the-Box and the rebuttal from the Office of Civil Rights.

Issue: The law on Ban-the-Box in Baltimore is inadequate compared to other states.

Action: Rev. Yeary will talk to Rev. Robert Turner, Chair of Howard County Human Rights regarding their internal research data on Ban-the-Box statistics.

Action: Mr. Parrott will find the Ban-the-Box article from the Baltimore Sun and the rebuttal to see: 1) the concerns, 2) the response, and 3) the data at that time.

Director Carter stated that Council President Young and Councilwoman Sneed are looking for feedback from the Commission to move forward on how to perfect the law after Mr. Parrott had sent a proposal on how the laws should be changed.

Commissioner Ruckman stated that we do have the power to send out surveys and that it would be useful to find out what other employers are doing.

Action: Chair Yeary requested in the drafting of the FedEx letter that the Commission asks that DLLR in its oversight role ensure that employers that require business licenses from the State as part of the renewal process are given a notification of the law.

Chair Yeary spoke about National trends on Ban-the-Box and Title VII issues. Commissioner Heaton asked about taking a look at the data from 2014 to the present. Mr. Parrott stated that even though Ban-the-Box was passed in 2014, it was not enforced until 2016 and that there may be limited information.

Action: Reach out to research institutions as a way to gather data based on business type, size, and employees.

Commissioner Heaton suggested that the Commission crafts a survey and how to disseminate; i.e., questions to ask, sample size.

Action: Commissioner Heaton will draft a survey sample. Mr. Parrott suggested that the Commission consults with DLLR since the letter indicates a partnership with them, and they may have data and statistics on employees.

Suggestions: Add this task to the Employment Discrimination Committee. Commissioner Akwei also asked if the Commission can use a specific case as a case study. Chair Yeary stated that we can use specific scenarios within the survey to address certain questions as they reach out to DLLR.

Action: Review Article 11, Subtitle 15 (Ban-the-Box Law) to understand the current provisions.

Action: Commissioner Ruckman will reach out to Director Ben Seigel of 21st Century Cities. They use various survey instruments for research purposes and may be able to assist the Commission with survey design if DLLR is willing to distribute.

IV. Director's Report

Director Carter introduced Charles Byrd as the Deputy Director over the Community Relations Commission as well as the Civilian Review Board. She also introduced Raemond Parrott as the new CRC Supervisor, and asked them to greet the Commission. Three offers were made for CRC investigators, two accepted and one is still pending.

In follow-up to the system issues with the Baltimore City fire and police departments, Director Carter stated that there is confirmation of Police Commissioner DeSousa. She is awaiting the reaction of Vanguard to the Commissioner's reorganization. From a preliminary discussion with Vanguard, President Lisa Robinson seemed very happy that many of the issues are going to be solved. There is a new President of the Vulcan Blazers, Kyle Caldwell, but he needs a little to get acclimated to the position.

Deputy Director Byrd and Supervisor Raemond Parrott spoke about the backlog of 160 cases and the work involved to close those cases. They anticipate that there should not be a backlog by February 2019. They are asking the more senior investigators to handle any new cases and ask the new investigators to work through the backlog.

Chair Yeary asked about the risk for having the backlog of cases that the Office can no longer gain credit. Mr. Parrott stated that there may not be a risk for those cases where individuals are unable to be reached. For those cases where the Statute of Limitations has run out, there will possibly be a significant degree of pushback. However, for the bulk of those cases Mr. Parrott stated that there would be an EEOC range of six years. He also stated that based on the Baltimore City code, these individuals can still go through the administrative process up to a public hearing which can result in damages in their favor.

Action: Chair Yeary asked Mr. Byrd to speak to Judge Davis and make him aware of these cases to identify the risk although there may not be any issues.

The Commission thanked Mr. Byrd and Mr. Parrott for their new plan of action.

V. Open Forum

There was no further business.

There being no further business, the Commission voted to adjourn the Public Session at 9:39 a.m. and move into the Executive Session.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Drummond
Secretary III