

City of Reading Human Relations Commission
September 9, 2020
MINUTES

Commissioners Present:

Karima (Karen) Archie
Lisa Blount
Kathryn Cobb-Holmes, Chair
Barbara Coffin
Valerie Phelps-Robinson
Richard Wagner
Zelda Yoder

Absent

Stacey Taylor

Staff

Kimberly Talbot

Guest

Johanny Cepeda-Freytiz

The meeting was called to order at 6:12 p.m. The minutes were reviewed. Commissioner Wagner moved. Commissioner Coffin seconded. Motion carried. The minutes were approved.

Executive Director's Report

The E.D. reported that Nilda started working in the office 4 days a week beginning May 26th. She was out on FMLA from July 17th – August 27th.

The office has two interns from Careerlink (Jacynthia Scott & Leslie Estrada).

The E.D. was asked to participate with the city census team, the lead remediation team and the Berks Service Corp Advisory Committee.

The office received funding from the Cares Act to assist with rent & utilities.

The eviction pilot program is called Reading's Eviction Prevention Project (REPP). The goal is to reduce the amount of tenants who are evicted as well as address some more of the immediate needs such as habitability issues. The first hearing occurred on September 8th in Judge Butler's courtroom.

A temporary employee was hired through a staffing agency. Luzette Reyes-Gomez started on July 13th and is still a part of the staff. The position is being paid for by a Department of Justice grant and by Cares Act. She is specifically working on rental applications. I have also requested to hire another bilingual individual strictly to answer phones. There is a meeting about this on 9/11.

The rental assistance application is on the city website. Clients are able to fill it out and the application is forwarded to me from the website. We have received 244 applications.

The EEOC would like for us to establish a mediation program in the office. I am very much looking forward to doing this.

Old Business:

The E.D. discussed PHRC's request for a meeting and Commissioner's Cobb-Holmes, Coffin, Blount, Yoder & Archie are willing to participate in the meeting.

Commissioner Wagner reports that the Pride event was held virtually.

Commissioner Yoder discussed the importance of voting.

Commissioners agreed to the E.D. applying for ESG funding. It was discussed in the May meeting.

New Business

Commissioner Wagner reports that Reading Pride held a food drive with "One Love". They will also be hosting a cleanup on the Southside on September 12th @ noon. Afterwards, everyone will go to City Park.

Public Comment:

None

Training and Conferences:

Commissioner Cobb-Holmes has agreed to forward any training opportunities to the E.D. to share with other Commissioners as she gets them.

Next meeting scheduled for October 14, 2020

Meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.