



ROCK ISLAND
HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMISSION

Mission: The mission of the Rock Island Human Rights Commission is to bring about greater public awareness of the ethnic and cultural diversity that exists within the community and to ensure that all humans are treated equally, regardless of race gender, religion, age, or disability.

Rock Island Human Rights Commission Special Meeting Minutes
Meeting was held in person with a virtual option
July 20, 2023; 5:00 pm

Commission Members Present

Steven Andich
Margie Mejia-Caraballo
Tamara Felden
Christiana Headley, Secretary
David Levin
Janet Lockhart Johnson, Chair
Jason Lopez, Vice Chair
Randall McMurray
Sara Meyer

Commission Members Absent

Thurgood Brooks - Thurgood submitted his resignation from the Human Rights Commission

Commission Members Virtual

Vince Thomas

Staff Present

Jerry Jones, City Liaison

Public Present

- **AGENDA ITEM #1** – Janet called to Order at 5 pm, Welcome, Introductions-Paris Brandy (Community Engagement Manager) and **Chiquita White** (Prairie State Legal Services). Chiquita works with lawyers and community partners on eviction, sealments and record expungements.

Continuing education item: Prairie State Legal Services

They oversee 36 counties. <https://pslegal.org/>. Organization started in 1977. Required to only work with U.S. Citizens unless the individual is a victim of human trafficking or domestic violence. They are a non profit law firm and do not charge for any services. They take applications from every potential client. New program (R3) which allows them to increase their income eligibility to reach a greater population. There are guidelines,

however, of certain populations within a community. They work on civil legal issues, not criminal situations (domestic violence, orders of protection, divorce, housing, housing quality, Medicare/Medicaid denials, SNAP/TANF benefits, public housing, evictions, elder abuse, financial exploitation, consumer debt and collection, utility services). If there is potential for a client to be incarcerated, they do not help with those issues or traffic tickets. Funding is through the Legal Service Organization (by Congress). If we have an immediate case that we think they can help with, reach out to **Chiquita** so she can do a screening. Her contact information is **(309) 283-3748**, cwhite@pslegal.org.

Telephone counseling is available 9am-1pm, Mon-Thur and is manned by attorneys who can give specific legal advice. Phone number for Rock Island County is (800) 322-9804

Paris will provide us with a link of a community survey for us to complete.

● **AGENDA ITEM #2** – Public Comment-None

● **AGENDA ITEM #3** – Approval of Minutes from June meeting, Steve moved to approve, Margie seconded. Unanimous.

● **AGENDA ITEM #4** – Old Business

Ordinance update and discussion: Jerry sent an email from Hector. His comment was: “[Excellent work drafting the worksheet. It’s very solid.](#)” **We all need to become very familiar with the new ordinance.**

- Complaint **86-2023-BW**: Update from Christiana. Spoke with Barbara on 6/20/23. The property manager, Michelle, told Barb her daughter could stay 2 weeks. Michelle then asked for 6 check stubs before the 2 weeks even though her daughter was not going to stay there long term. Barb felt Michelle was unnecessarily aggressive towards her and her family. The maintenance man slid an application under her door and stated that if Kerisha didn’t fill out the app in 5 days, then Barb would get a 10 day eviction notice. Sala Flats has a policy of 2 weeks for others to stay on premises. Barb’s other daughter will no longer bring her grandkids to visit anymore because she doesn’t want to get her in trouble. Barb acknowledged that this likely wasn’t a violation and she has guidelines to follow and feels she could have done it nicer and more professionally. Barbara states that she just wants something said to Michelle about how she did her job. After discussion, the commission has decided that it is not a situation we can further investigate. We will recommend she contact Prairie State Legal Services to discuss her options with eviction and the maintenance man entering her property without notice. Christiana will contact her and recommend this as an option for her and will send a follow up letter. Christiana made a motion to not accept this case because it does not fall within our guidelines. Jason seconded the motion. Unanimous vote.
- Complaint **87-2023-MH**: Update from Jason. Jason talked to Melvin. Melvin and Marvin lived in this apartment building. There was a fire and they weren’t allowed in the building. When they filed the complaint they were already being evicted from the property because their apartment was unkempt. Melvin felt there was discrimination driving his eviction, but he couldn’t identify the basis for the discrimination. Melvin acknowledged that the inspector stated it was an unkempt apartment. Jason feels this is not based in discrimination. David made a motion to decline the case. Margie seconded. Unanimous. Christiana will send a letter as well.

● **AGENDA ITEM #6** – New Business

We regretfully accept Thurgood Brooks resignation and thank him for his service.

New member discussion and recommendation (Top 3 choices are Simone Collins, Cory Holloway and Lyss Champi; 4th choice is Keenen Wilson). Jerry will reach out to the candidates to see if they are still interested and make a recommendation to the mayor who appoints new members.

Discussion of group reading “How to be an Antiracist”: **Please read Chapters 1 and 2** for discussion.

Tamara is hosting an event on **Saturday 8/5/23 at 4 pm**. There will be some interesting conversation (even if you haven’t read the entire book) about “Lost in the Black Hologram” by Tom McKay at the Artsy Bookworm, 1319 30th St, Rock Island, IL. Commission members are strongly encouraged to attend.

● **AGENDA ITEM #7** – Commissioner Comments

Tamara stated it was hugely helpful to have Prairie State Services here to share their services with us and educate us on resources.

Jason volunteers with the trans community through Clock, Inc. Major Rachel Jones has become a target by conservative podcasts.

QC Interfaith, Clock, Inc. and Project of the Quad Cities are potential organizations that could come in and present to our group.

● **AGENDA ITEM #8** – Adjourn: Meeting was adjourned at 6:08 pm by Janet.

NEXT MEETING: August 17, 2023 at 630 Martin Luther King Dr. Rock Island, IL 61201 at 5:00 p.m. The Rock Island Human Rights Commission meets the third Thursday of each month.