

Prince George's County Human Rights Commission

Monday, Jan. 23, 2023

Zoom Meeting of the
Prince George's County
Human Rights Commission

Attendees:

Commissioners:

Charlene Proctor, Chair
Joseph Reed, Vice-Chair
Sylvia Johnson
Ademola Oduyebo
Wendi Howard
Keith Adams
Traci Birkhead
Roslyn Brown
Daryl Jackson

Absent:

Brindisi Chan (Excused)

Staff:

Renée Battle-Brooks
Executive Director

Jose Villegas
Assistant Director

Jacqueline Cochran
Clerk to the Commission

Guests:

Ngeri Azueway (MCCR)
Young Scholars Program Students

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

1. Call to Order – The Chair called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm and conducted the roll call for this Commission Meeting in the absence of a Commission Secretary.
2. Adopt Agenda – The Chair called for a review of the agenda. The open meeting agenda was adopted as distributed.
3. Approval of Minutes of the **October 23, 2022**, Commission Meeting. The Minutes were adopted as distributed.

4. REPORT OF THE CHAIR

The Chair began her report by welcoming everyone to the Human Rights Commission meeting. She gave a special welcome to the Young Scholars Program students who were in attendance. The Chair then took a moment to introduce the four newly appointed commissioners to the Human Rights Commission. The newly appointed commissioners welcomed were Commissioner Keith Adams, Commissioner Roslyn Brown, Commissioner Traci Birkhead and Commissioner Daryl Jackson. Following the introduction of the new commissioners, Chair Proctor informed the Commission of the recent resignation of Commissioner Llamilet Gutierrez due to her appointment as a Judge for the District Court

in Prince George's County, Maryland. Chair Proctor praised Commissioner Gutierrez on her tremendous accomplishments. Chair Proctor ended her report by reminding the Commission of the upcoming virtual training presented by the Maryland Human Rights Commission that will be held on February 17, 2023.

5. REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Executive Director Renee Battle- Brooks began her report by welcoming the members of the public including the Young Scholars Program students who were of attendance as well. She then proceeded to congratulate the newly appointed commissioners and praised them for stepping up to the task at hand. The Executive Director gave a brief commercial on the Office of Human Rights, outlining the services rendered to Prince George's County residents. She informed the members of the public that the Office of Human Rights is the County's civil human rights educational and enforcement agency, which was stood up in the year of 1972. As a result of Teresa Douglas Banks, a citizen who was a zealous advocate who lobbied and advocated with the new County Council for this office, due to police brutality that occurred in 1972 within the brown and black communities. Executive Director Battle-Brooks explained the break down of the 4 divisions that make up the agency.

- Division 1 – Includes the Human Rights Commission which is tasked under the Investigation Division with investigating allegations of discrimination in employment, housing discrimination complaints, public accommodation with law enforcement, education, commercial and residential real estate but not limited to banking discrimination.
- Division 2 – Entails the Human Trafficking Task Force which was created in 2013 by the County Council, recognizing that sex and labor trafficking was occurring in Prince George's County and within the region. The Human Trafficking Task Force unlike many other task forces is government formed and organized and as part of that resolution that was enacted it mandates that the Executive Director of the Office of Human Rights must serve as The Chair for said task force. The Human Trafficking Task Force are tasked with identifying and recovering victim survivors, with increasing the quality of the prosecution of traffickers and with educating the public.
- Division 3- Ensures language access under the Public Services Act, which was passed in 2017, which was later amended in 2020. In this legislation, it states if you are accessing Prince George's County Government services you are entitled to those services being rendered in the language of your preference. The Office of Human Rights is tasked with not only the implementation of the language access but also with investigating any allegations of violation of the Public Services Act.
- Division 4- The Office of Human Rights under Division 4 is tasked with the public outreach and engagement within Prince George's County. The sole mission of Division 4 is to build community and to build understanding amongst Prince George's County residents. In doing so the Office of Human Rights has created a programming designed to help build the community's understanding and to reduce instances of hate, bias, and violence.

The Executive Director continued her report by briefly sharing the completion of the Youth Leadership Academy and noting their next cohort will begin on February 21st, 2023, at 5:00 PM, as a virtual session. She also discussed the success of their on-going

series, “Women in Faith- Diverse Voices Speak”, on the discussion topic, “How Do We Deal with Intolerance Through the Faith Lens”. Executive Director Battle-Brooks also referenced their Author Series in where they interview authors of books and talk about their work, the authors interviewed for the month of January were, Author Dolma Yanos Figuero regarding her book, “A Woman of Endurance”; Native American and Indigenous Leader Cassidy Caron, was interviewed during Native American and Indigenous People's Month; Author Steve Pfeiffer and his book, “The Moment: Changemakers on Why and How They Joined the Fight for Social Justice”.

The Executive Director informed the Commission of the Office of Human Rights’ partnership with the Department of Labor and the EEOC to discuss what the Office of Human Rights entails of during a lunchtime presentation broadcasted nationally. Following this event, the Executive Director also reported having conducted a panel discussion on, “Can Minorities Also Be Bigoted”, which included panel members Dr. Chris Marsh a Sociologist teacher from the University of Maryland, Doctoral student Rodrigo Martinez, Rama Abdulalim and Rabbi Ravi Sharansky. In closing, the Executive Director introduced the new council for the Human Rights Commission Attorney Gabriel Christian and his law firm which are located within the county. She stated Attorney Gabriel Christian is an ardent human rights advocate and is eager to have him on board. Attorney Gabriel Christian thanked the Executive Director for the introduction and expressed his eagerness to serve the Commission.

6. CASES SCHEDULED FOR PUBLIC HEARING - None

7. CASE STATUS UPDATE

FEPA Charge No.: HRC21-0202

EEOC Case No.: 531-2020-02614

Teonna Marshall v Seafood Fusions, Inc (aka Hook and Reel, Inc.)

Investigator Langston Clay

Panel Members: Former Commissioner Bryant as Panel Chair, Current Commissioner Johnson, Former Vice-Chair Sadler; Former Secretary Woolfolk as the alternate.

Four nights of public hearing were held in this matter on May 11th, May 16th, June 15th, June 16th, and June 23, 2022. An opinion and order are pending in this matter.

8. APPEAL HEARING

Below is an update on the petitions for judicial review of Commission decisions before the Circuit Court of Prince George’s County.

Lois Aba Kwakyewaa Yankah v Gateway Hall, LLC

OHR Case No.: HRC20-1203

Case Closed on October 1, 2022, Judge Curry ORDERED:

1. Respondent's motion to dismiss petition for judicial review is GRANTED; 2. The petition for judicial review

filed by petitioner Lois Aba Kwakyewaa Yankah is
DISMISSED WITH PREJUDICE. Civil Case Closure Form,
Fd. 015 civil closure form.

9. **ATTENDANCE RECORD** – Attached

The Chair invited the Commissioners to review the attendance record and contact the Clerk for the Commission about any corrections.

10. **NEW BUSINESS**

11. **OLD BUSINESS**

12. **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- a. The next Commission meeting is scheduled for February 27, 2023.

13. **CLOSED SESSION**

Vice Chair Reed moved and Commissioner Johnson seconded the motion to move to closed session to comply with the confidentiality provision of Division 12 which prevents public disclosure of particular matters. By a unanimous vote, the Commission entered into closes session. Upon return from closed session, Vice Chair Reed reported:

In the matter of: HRC19-0705

By unanimous vote, the Commission voted that the action of the Executive Director be upheld and the case shall stand dismissed.

In the matter of: HR22-0604

By majority vote, the Commission voted that the action of the Executive Director be upheld and the case shall stand dismissed.

In the matter of: HRC21-0202

By unanimous vote, the Commission voted that the Respondent did not discriminate against the Complainant and was not liable for damages; and the case was dismissed with prejudice.

14. **ADJOURNMENT** – 7:20 pm



Jacqueline Cochran
Clerk to the Commission