
CITY OF KALAMAZOO
Civil Rights Board
Wednesday, August 3, 2022 – 7:00 p.m. • City Commission Chambers

MEMBERS PRESENT: Marissa Harrington, Dustin Corwin, Sandra Calderon, Madison Lukeman, Jacob Beach.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Janeen Brown (excused)

CITY STAFF PRESENT: Victor Green (Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Interim Director), Marcia Jones (Assistant City Attorney), Tinessa Patterson (Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, Coordinator).

The Civil Rights Board meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m. by Marissa Harrington.

Agenda: Director Beach motioned to adopt meeting agenda; supported by Director Corwin. Motion approved by unanimous vote. Agenda adopted.

Minutes: Director Calderon motioned to approve minutes from June 30, 2022; supported by Director Beach. Motion approved by unanimous vote. Minutes adopted.

Public Announcements and Communications: None

New Business:

Case Hearing – The board heard an ordinance complaint filed by Dustin Corwin against respondent Berkshire Hathaway. Complainant Corwin states that respondent violated section 18(A)-2(B) of the Kalamazoo City Ordinance by denying him housing based upon his past criminal convictions. The complaint was investigated by the City Attorney’s office and their findings and recommendations were provided to the Complainant and the Respondent. Respondent was found to be in violation of the ordinance. The City Attorney’s office recommended a settlement agreement be reached between the parties in which Mr. Corwin upon filing a rental application and establishing that he qualifies for an apartment based upon legitimate conditions other than his criminal record, be offered an available apartment that meets his needs, and the City is provided updated policies and applications by the respondent that comply with the requirements of Chapter 18A-2. Respondent was not present and unable to make comments.

- Complaint believes the consequences of the Chapter 18A-2 violation need to be more severe, rather than focusing entirely on reeducation. Businesses find ways to bend rules and continue to discriminate.
- Directors deliberated on the possible solutions the board can recommend to the City Manager, the recommendation brought forward by the City Attorney’s Office, and the potential enforcing abilities of the board.
- Board recommends amending the City Attorney’s recommendation to require posting of ordinance 18 and 18A in all rental offices within the City of Kalamazoo, Berkshire Hathaway update rental applications, policies, and procedures within the next 14 days, and that the respondent provide proof of fair housing training with the inclusion of local ordinance all property managers within the City of Kalamazoo in the next 90 days as well as including chapter 18 ordinance on property advertisements.

Ordinance Revision Update – Board discusses the inclusion of enforcement abilities of the board in chapter 18 ordinance. Attorney Jones states that board can make recommendations on amendments to the current ordinance, the recommendations will be placed in the ordinance, and the City Attorney’s office recommends that once proposed changes are included in the new ordinance, that another community forum is conducted to educate the public. Once ordinance has been drafted, it will be presented to the City Commission. (1:14:00:00)

- Recommend that the board has final decision power on complaint cases.
- City Attorney's office will investigate the possibility of enforcing the return of application fees to complainants.
- Board suggested the inclusion of mailing and notification information to be included in the information flow chart. The board requested that the City Attorney's Office create a list of recommendations the board can make and updates on ordinance drafts featuring the recommendations.

Board Member Application/Interview Process Update – Director Beach shared that there have been multiple applications received by the nominating committee (includes Director Beach, Lukeman, and Brown). The scheduling of interviews is slated to be done in the next two weeks and have a recommendation to the board by the September meeting.

Citizen Comments: None

Miscellaneous Board Comments: Director Lukeman stated that it would be important to keep track of attendees to the fair housing training which would provide insight into if the community is putting forth efforts to understand the ordinance. Director Beach congratulated the board for hearing their first case and thanked them for their time.

Closing Comments: None

Next Meeting: September

ADJOURNMENT: 8:30 p.m.

Lal Tluangi, Recording Secretary
Victor Green, Staff Liaison
Stephanie Hoffman, City Commission Liaison
Marissa Harrington, Chair