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

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: Janeen Brown (unexcused)

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 7:03 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 Beach motioned to approve minutes from August 3, 2022; supported by Director Corwin. Motion approved by unanimous vote. Minutes adopted.

Public Announcements and Communications:

Interim DEI Director Victor Green introduced the new DEI Director, Tanya Hewitt-Smith, to the board and public. DEI Coordinator Tinessa Patterson announced that she would be moving to an executive assistant position at the City Manager's Office and will continue to assist the board until a replacement has been found.

New Business:

Case Hearing – The board heard an ordinance complaint filed by Dustin Corwin against respondent Candlewyck Apartment. 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, application fees be refunded, and the City is provided updated polices and applications by the respondent that comply with the requirements of Chapter 18A-2.

- Complainant requested that prosecution be pursued as he tried to educate the apartment on the ordinance by printing the ordinance and providing it to management. The complainant was open about his felony record and was initially told that low level felonies can get an apartment. Complainant tried to reach out to the leasing company, but communication was barred. Complainant noted that he was just approved for his apartment with Candlewyck two weeks ago after a full year of no communication.
- Candlewyck Apartment sent a local legal counsel, Brian Weiss, as a representative. Mr. Weiss shared that Candlewyck wish to resolve the complaint and are prepared to do the following:
 - Refund the application fees to Mr. Corwin and his partner, Ms. Wells and allow Mr. Corwin and Ms. Wells to reapply without an application fee and rent an apartment (contingent that they meet all other requirements and availability).

- They have changed some of their internal policies but would like city input to ensure they meet the ordinance requirements.
- Candlewyck will work with their third-party vendor to meet compliance requirements. Candlewyck is also prepared to post the ordinance on its website or a link. If the city has any ordinance-specific training, they are willing to have staff be involved.
- Mr. Weiss recommended to incorporate the need for amending the rental application to allow applicants to provide information including documents and attachments of any rehabilitation for any mitigating factors.

Board recommends amending the City Attorney's recommendation to require:

- Candlewyck Apartments post Chapter 18 and 18A in all rental offices within the City of Kalamazoo and on their website within the next 90 days.
- Candlewyck Apartments to update rental applications to allow applicants to provide information including documents and attachments of any rehabilitation for any mitigating factors within the next 90 days.
- Candlewyck send staff to take ordinance training once they are provided by the city.
- Candlewyck Apartments must refund Mr. Corwin and Ms. Wells in the next 10 business days.
- Update policy that reflects the ordinance in partnership with any third-party vendors within the next 90 days.
- Director Beach made the motion for the above recommendations, supported by Director Lukeman. Motion approved by unanimous vote. Motion passed.

Ordinance Revision Update – Attorney Jones shared that the City Attorney's Office has amended the ordinance to include language regarding vouchers which will be sent to board members to review this week (9/7/2022).

Board Member Application/Interview Process Update – Director Beach announced that the nominating committee recommends Lyonel LaGrone II for the board position to be brought forth to the City Commission for final approval. Director Beach motioned to approve Lyonel LaGrone II as the nominee to the board position, supported by Director Corwin. Motion approved by unanimous vote. Motion passed.

Education Update/Discussion – Chair Harrington shared the importance of education outreach and stated that with the addition of a new board member, the education subcommittee will need to convene and begin the education outreach process. Education subcommittee will work with City Attorney Office to develop ordinance training and resources.

Citizen Comments:

Richard Stewart (Call-in) - The Civil Rights Board needs to change its name as it does not include disability and the board needs to identify itself clearly. Stated that he has tried to invite Director Beach to speak at an event to explain the ordinance but has been ignored.

Miscellaneous Board Comments: Both Director Beach and Harrington thanked Tinessa Patterson and Victor Green for their work and dedication to the board.

Closing Comments: None

Next Meeting: October 5, 2022

ADJOURNMENT: 8:12 p.m.

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

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