
CITY OF KALAMAZOO
Civil Rights Board
Wednesday, October 1, 2025 – 5:00 p.m. • City Commission Chambers

MEMBERS PRESENT: Madison Lukeman, Sandra Calderon, Willow Sipling, Joshua DeBoer, and Cathy Phason

MEMBERS ABSENT: Eursla Moore-Doyle (excused) and Pamela Burpee (excused)

Ex-Officio Members: Tanya Hewitt-Smith and Commissioner Hoffman

CITY STAFF PRESENT: Marcia Jones (Assistant City Attorney), Lal Tluangi (Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Specialist).

The Civil Rights Board meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Chair Phason.

Agenda: Vice-Chair Lukeman motioned to approve the agenda. Director DeBoer seconded the motion. Motion approved by unanimous vote. Agenda adopted.

Minutes: Director Sipling motioned to approve minutes from August 6th, 2025, with the correction of Director DeBoer's name, supported by Vice-Chair Lukeman. Motion approved by unanimous vote. August 6th, 2025, minutes approved.

Public Announcements and Communications: None.

New Business:

Education Subcommittee Update and Appointment – Vice-Chair Lukeman reported that the Education Subcommittee has met three times and is meeting biweekly. The subcommittee is focused on creating a meeting schedule, identifying community experts to join, and developing educational materials such as brochures and flyers to increase community engagement. Invitations have been sent to recommended community members. Director DeBoer emphasized the importance of educating the public on the complaint process and aligning expectations. Director Willow highlighted the need to ensure complaint forms align with the ordinance's scope and encouraged collaboration between subcommittees. Chair Phason stressed the value of community events for raising awareness. Director Calderon suggested that any educational materials be distributed through partner organizations like El Concilio, Disability Network, and OutFront. The subcommittee is also exploring ordinance training for board members, potentially through the City Attorney's office, and building upon existing training resources. Chair Phason confirmed Director Calderon's resignation from the subcommittee due to scheduling conflicts; however, Director Calderon expressed willingness to rejoin if meetings are rescheduled. Vice-Chair Lukeman indicated that while scheduling flexibility may be explored, a consistent meeting structure will be needed as the subcommittee grows. The subcommittee remains committed to involving community members while advancing its core objectives.

Ordinance Review Subcommittee Update – During the meeting, Director Sipling shared that the Ordinance Subcommittee is working to update the complaint form to clarify jurisdiction and explore how the board can take a more active role in the complaint process. Director Sipling noted examples from New York and Portland, where similar boards have greater authority, such as initiating complaints and working closely with police departments. Chair Phason emphasized the importance of board involvement, encouraging complaint submissions, and building partnerships with local organizations. Commissioner Hoffman raised the need to clarify where residents can get help filing complaints, and Director DeBoer responded that city staff and 3-1-1 can provide assistance. There was discussion about how other cities, like Ann Arbor, route complaints directly to their boards, prompting considerations around staff and board capacity. Both Chair Phason and Vice-Chair Lukeman stressed the need for public education, with the Education Subcommittee

reviewing materials from other cities. Director DeBoer added that the updated form will help filter out complaints outside the ordinance's scope while still encouraging documentation. Director Hewitt-Smith supported this approach and noted the city's willingness to support the subcommittee's educational efforts.

Public Comments:

Maggie Adams – Expressed appreciation for the presence of the board and raised concern about the phrase “charging forward” used by Vice-Chair Lukeman, suggesting it implies a sense of urgency that may overlook the need to slow down and address underlying issues. Regarding community engagement, they emphasized the importance of reaching marginalized community members who may not attend public events.

Charlae Davis – Thanked the board for their hard work and gave a special acknowledgment to Vice Mayor Patrese for being a catalyst in creating the ordinance, as well as recognizing the collaboration of multiple agencies in its development. They emphasized the importance of shared decision-making between systems and the community, including the need for inclusive meeting times and events. Additionally, they voiced support for a shared leadership model within the Education Subcommittee, suggesting a co-chair structure that includes both a board member and a community representative.

Miscellaneous Board Comments: Director Lukeman announced that the Education Subcommittee will meet on October 6th at 1:00 PM and encouraged interested community members to contact DEI staff for details. She noted her openness to adjusting meeting times but emphasized that it is the responsibility of members to attend as scheduled. She also clarified her previous use of the phrase “charge forward,” explaining that it was meant to reflect taking informed action based on board and community feedback.

Director Sipling encouraged the board to remain open to constructive feedback and expressed appreciation for the ongoing co-learning. Chair Phason shared the DEI staff's contact information with the community and thanked public commenters for reminding the board to prioritize inclusion and collaboration. She also expressed gratitude to the board for their active involvement in subcommittees and to city staff for their continued support.

Director Hewitt-Smith supported the idea of shared leadership within subcommittees and endorsed having a community member serve as co-chair. Chair Phason agreed and noted that using the term “co-leader” might better reflect the intention of inclusive leadership. The board clarified that this role is not limited to board members and could include a qualified community expert. Commissioner Hoffman also recommended involving staff from the Continuum of Care in future discussions.

Closing Comments: None

Next Meeting: December 3, 2025, at 5:00 pm

ADJOURNMENT: 5:45 pm

Lal Tluangi, Recording Secretary
Tanya Hewitt-Smith, Staff Liaison
Stephanie Hoffman, City Commission Liaison
Cathy Phason, Chairs