

**MICHIGAN CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION MEETING**

Monday, January 27, 2020 - 5:00 P.M.  
MDCR Detroit Office, Cadillac Place Building  
3054 W Grand Blvd., Suite 3-652  
Detroit, MI 48202

**MINUTES**

PRESENT: Commission Vice Chair Stacie Clayton  
Commission Secretary Laura Reyes Kopack  
Commissioner Ira Combs, Jr.  
Commissioner Regina Gasco-Bentley  
Commissioner Denise Grim  
Commissioner Jeffrey Sakwa  
NEW Commissioner Zenna Elhasan  
NEW Commissioner Portia Roberson

CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

The meeting of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission was called to order by Vice-Chair Clayton at 5:05 p.m. Roll Call of the Commissioners was taken to determine a quorum. Commissioner Combs, Commissioner Gasco-Bentley, Commissioner Grim, Commissioner Kopack, Commissioner Sakwa, Commissioner Elhasan, Commissioner Clayton. With 7 of 8 Commissioners present, quorum requirements were met.

SWEARING-IN OF NEW COMMISSIONER – Zenna Elhasan

Vice-Chair Clayton administered the Oath of Office to new Commissioner Zenna Elhasan.

APPROVAL OF MEETING AGENDA

**MOTION: Move to Approve the Meeting Agenda. On Motion duly made (Combs) and supported (Kopack), the Agenda was Approved. Motion carried unanimously.**

ADOPTION OF CONSENT AGENDA

**MOTION: Move to Adopt the Consent Agenda. On Motion duly made (Combs) and supported (Grim), the Consent Agenda was Adopted. Motion carried unanimously.**

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

**MOTION: Move to Approve the Meeting Minutes for November 18, 2019. On Motion duly made (Combs) and supported (Kopack), the Minutes from the November 18, 2019 were Approved as submitted. Motion carried by majority vote of 6-0-1.**

Yea 6 (Clayton, Combs, Gasco-Bentley, Grim, Kopack, Sakwa)  
Nay 0  
Abstention – 1 (Elhasan)

***New Commissioner Portia Roberson arrived at 5:11 p.m.***

**SWEARING-IN OF NEW COMMISSIONER – Portia Roberson**

Vice-Chair Clayton administered the Oath of Office to new Commissioner Portia Roberson.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

**COMMISSION BUSINESS**

**Special Presentation**

Former commissioners Rasha Demashkieh and Alma Wheeler Smith were unable to attend. They will be invited to the next meeting on March 23, 2020.

**Commission Committee Reports**

This year's Nominating Committee consisted of Commissioners Clayton, Demashkieh and Sakwa. The Nominating Committee proposed the following slate for the 2020 Election of Officers: Chair - Commissioner Clayton; Vice-Chair – Commissioner Kopack; Secretary – Commissioner Sakwa. No additional nominations were brought forth.

**Election of Officers**

Office of Secretary: Jeff Sakwa

**MOTION: Move to Approve Commissioner Sakwa as Secretary. On Motion duly made (Gasco-Bentley) and supported (Kopack), Commissioner Sakwa was Approved as Secretary. Motion carried unanimously.**

Office of Vice-Chair: Laura Reyes Kopack

**MOTION: Move to Approve Commissioner Kopack as Vice-Chair. On Motion duly made (Sakwa) and supported (Combs), Commissioner Kopack was Approved as Vice-Chair. Motion carried unanimously.**

Office of Chair: Stacie Clayton

**MOTION: Move to Approve Commissioner Clayton as Chair. On Motion duly made (Roberson) and supported (Combs), Commissioner Clayton was Approved as Chair. Motion carried unanimously.**

**2020 Commission Meeting Scheduling**

**MOTION: Move to Open the 2020 Commission Meeting Scheduling for discussion. On Motion duly made (Elhasan) and supported (Combs), the opening of discussion on the 2020 Commission meeting scheduling was Approved. Motion carried unanimously.**

## Working Sessions

**MOTION: Move to Amend the 2020 Commission Meeting Schedule by returning to the bi-monthly meeting schedule and omitting the Working Sessions.** Following discussion, **on Motion duly made (Sakwa) and supported (Grim), the Amended 2020 Commission Meeting Schedule was Approved.** *Motion carried unanimously.*

## New Commissioner Orientation and Educational Retreat

**MOTION: Move to Schedule the New Commissioner Orientation and the Commission Educational Retreat on February 24, 2020, 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. at a location to be determined.** Following discussion, **on Motion duly made (Combs) and supported (Grim), the date for the Orientation and Retreat was Approved.** *Motion carried unanimously.*

## Executive Director Selection Process Update, Sylvia Elliott

Ms. Elliott, Special Advisor to the Commission, provided general information and proposed a timeline regarding the Executive Director Selection process.

**MOTION: Move to Approve the Executive Director Selection Process to include language pertaining to when the background check will occur for the final two candidates.** Following discussion, **on Motion duly made (Roberson) and supported (Combs), the revised Executive Director Selection Process was Approved.** *Motion carried unanimously.*

## COMMUNICATIONS

This agenda item was waived.

## DIVISION REPORTS

### Executive Director Report, Mary Engelman (Interim)

Ms. Engelman provided updates on the following:

>Recommendations regarding Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers – to pre-arrange meetings with Commissioners and MSFWs to take individual testimony in a non-public setting; consider holding additional hearings or create a subcommittee. Commissioner Kopack recommended that whatever testimony/information was received at the first two hearings be submitted to Director Engelman for summarization and determination of next steps. The summary will be included in the Director's Report for the March 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting.

>Update and discussion on the Enumeration Study. Commissioner Combs recommended that language regarding driver's licenses be included in the narrative of the report.

>Budget update – the Commission asked for a copy of the budget for 2019 and 2020 Fiscal Years. The Commission requested a MDCR budget presentation for

the March 23, 2020 meeting. The Commission requested updates on the work of the Governor's Poverty Task Force. The Commission requested that the new Executive Director continue the work started with the Minority and Women Owned Businesses. The Commission requested a copy of their initiatives for 2020 they discussed at the November 23, 2019 meeting (Minority and Women Owned Businesses Task Force; Zoning as a Tool for Discrimination Task Force; Guardianship Abuse Task Force).

>Annual Report update – A final draft was distributed to the Commission for revisions and approval.

>Update on Grand Rapids Police Department

### **MICHIGAN CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION STATEMENT ON GRPD INVESTIGATIONS, Commission Vice-Chair Kopack**

In her report to the Commission, Interim Director Engelman told us that she recently met with leadership from several different Grand Rapids civil rights groups and learned there is some public concern that the Department may not follow through on its commitment to investigate whether there are systemic civil rights violations within the Grand Rapids Police Department. We want to take this opportunity to assure Grand Rapids citizens and visitors that our commitment is unwavering.

We understand that recent settlements have been reached involving complaints brought by individuals on their own behalf. Neither the Department of Civil Rights nor this Commission were involved in those settlements, and it is our position that the settlement of individual claims of past misconduct does not limit our ability to look at whether they may be part of systemic problems that must be corrected to protect the public going forward.

While the Commission is in the process of selecting a new Executive Director for the Department of Civil Rights, the commitment to pursue the investigation was made on behalf of the Department and this Commission.

This Commission is committed to ensuring that the Director we select will continue the investigation of alleged systemic civil rights abuses by the Grand Rapids Police Department to its conclusion, pursue any appropriate remedies, and fully report on the Department's findings.

**MOTION: To Adopt the Statement as amended on the Grand Rapids Police Department. Following discussion, on Motion duly made (Combs) and supported (Roberson), the Statement was Adopted. *Motion carried unanimously.***

### **DEPARTMENT INITIATIVES UPDATE**

Update on Report on Education/Civil Rights Hearings and Updated Timelines, Dan Levy

A draft report on Education was distributed to the Commission for revisions and approval. The Commission requested that upon finalization of the Education Report that a press conference be held prior to releasing the report to the public. The Commission agreed to vote on the finalized report at their February 29<sup>th</sup> special meeting.

## ONGOING BUSINESS

Attorney General Report/Update, Ron Robinson

Mr. Robinson provided updates on the following cases: ***American Freedom Law Center v. AG Dana Nessel and former director Agustin Arbulu; Robert Romeg v. Boulder Cliff's Condominiums.*** Commissioner Combs requested an update from the AG's Office on Human Trafficking at the March 23<sup>rd</sup> Meeting.

## NEW BUSINESS

There was no New Business.

## COMMISSIONER COMMENT

Commissioner Grim distributed flyers for the upcoming events in honor of Fred T. Korematsu Day, and brought forth the following Motion:

**MOTION: To Reaffirm the Resolution in recognition of Fred T. Korematsu. On Motion duly made (Grim) and supported (Sakwa), the reaffirmation of the Resolution honoring Fred Korematsu was Approved. Motion carried unanimously.**

Chair Clayton requested that the Commission convene the March 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting in Grand Rapids, and brought forth the following Motion:

**MOTION: To convene the March 23, 2020 Commission Meeting in Grand Rapids. On Motion duly made (Gasco-Bentley) and supported (Combs), the next regular meeting of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission will convene in Grand Rapids at a location to be determined. Motion carried unanimously.**

Chair Clayton recognized Interim Director Mary Engelman and Special Advisor Sylvia Elliott for their work in preparation for this meeting.

## ADJOURNMENT

**MOTION: To Adjourn the meeting. On Motion duly made (Combs) and supported (Sakwa), the meeting of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission Adjourned at 7:41 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.**

*The next regular meeting of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission is scheduled for March 23, 2020; the next special meeting of the Commission is February 29, 2020.*