

STATE OF CONNECTICUT COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES



Regular Commission Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, June 14, 2023
2:00 p.m.
Via Microsoft TEAMS

Commissioners Present

Alex Harris
Edward Mambruno
Andrew Norton
Edith Pestana
Joseph Suggs

Commissioners Absent

Lisa Giliberto
Nick Kapoor

Staff Present

Tanya A. Hughes, Executive Director
Kimberly Jacobsen, Managing Director, Legal
Michelle Dumas Keuler, Managing Director, Legal
Robert Aldi, Regional Manager
Jonathan Sykes, HRO Attorney
Gabriela Sandoval, HRO Attorney
Anna-Marie Puryear, HRO Attorney
Jody Walker-Smith, HRO Attorney
Darcy Strand, Legislative Analyst
Laura Roxbury, HRO Representative
Ana Mitchell, Human Rights Investigator
Robert Berriault, HRO Trainee
Darian Pitts, Executive Secretary

Cheryl Sharp, Deputy Director
Diane Carter, Regional Manager
Jaime Rubin, Regional Manager
Shawn Burns, Regional Manager
Catherine Spain, HRO Attorney
Michael E. Roberts, HRO Attorney
Jo Keogh, HRO Attorney
Spencer Hill, HRO Attorney
Neva Vigezzi, Supervisor, AA (TWR)
Gary Madison, HRO Representative
Jase Olavarria, HRO Trainee
Kristen Parker, Executive Secretary
Laura Thurston, Asst. Attorney General

I. CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Andrew Norton called the meeting to order at 2:06 PM.

II. ELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON PRO TEMPORE

Commissioner Norton entertained a motion to elect the Chair Pro Tempore. Commissioner Pestana moved to elect Commissioner Norton as Chairperson Pro Tempore for the June 14, 2023, Commission meeting. Commissioner Suggs seconded the motion. The motion carried. Yes (2); No (0); Abstentions (0).

III. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Commissioner Norton informed that he did not have anything to report.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commission Norton noted in the absence of Secretary Mambruno, he would entertain the motion to approve the Minutes of the May 10, 2023, Regular Commission Meeting as presented. Commissioner Suggs moved the motion to accept the Minutes. There was brief discussion on whether it was proper for Commissioner Pestana to second the motion because she was not at the previous meeting. Director Hughes informed that Commissioner Pestana could still second the motion. Commissioner Pestana then seconded. Commission Norton asked for discussion. Seeing none he called for a motion to accept the 2023-5-10 Commission meeting minutes as written. The motion carried. Yes (1); No (0); Abstentions (1). Commissioner Pestana abstained.

V. AFFIRMATIVE ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS – VOTE REQUIRED

Presented by Deputy Director Cheryl Sharp

Charter Oak State College

Staff representing the Charter Oak State College were John Paul Chaisson-Cadenas, VP of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Nicholas D’Agostino, Director of Equity and Civil Rights, Rebecca Cannon-Klemenz, Equity and Civil Rights and Compliance Specialist, Edward Klonoski, President, Michael Moriarty, Chief Financial Officer, David Ferreira, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs.

This plan was recommended for approval based on compliance with the following: the plan contains all the elements required by sections 46a-68-78 through 46a-68-94, inclusive.

The agency has not met all or substantially met all of its hiring goals. Promotional goals were not established in the prior filing. Program goals met. The agency demonstrated every good faith effort to achieve its goals, but despite these efforts was unable to do so. The agency had no deficiencies in the prior plan reviews and therefore is in compliance with the (b)(4) standard.

The Goal Achievement is as follows:

- Hiring Goal Achievement: 1 out of 7 or 14%
- Promotional Goal Achievement: None
- Program Goal Achievement 3 out of 3 or 100%

The history of approval:

2021 Approved; 2019 Approved; 2018 Conditionally Approved; 2017 Approved; 2016 Approved.

*Commissioner Mambruno joined the meeting at 2:16 PM

Commissioner Suggs moved to approve Charter Oak State College Affirmative Action Plan and for them to retain biennial filing status. Commissioner Pestana seconded. The motion carried. Yes (3); No (0); Abstentions (0).

Connecticut State Library

Staff representing the Connecticut State Library were Deborah Schander, State Librarian, Robert Kinney, Outreach Services Librarian.

This plan was recommended for approval based on compliance with the following: the plan contains all the elements required by sections 46a-68-78 through 46a-68-94. The agency has met all or substantially met all of its hiring goals; but not all of the promotional program goals. No program goals were established in the prior filing. The agency demonstrated every good faith

effort to achieve its goals and despite these efforts was unable to do so. The agency had no deficiencies in the prior plan review and therefore is in compliance with the (b)(4) standard.

The Goal Achievement is as follows:

- Hiring Goal Achievement: 2 out of 4 or 50%
- Promotional Goal Achievement: 0 out of 1 or 0%
- Program Goal Achievement: None

The five-year history of filing is as follows: 2021 Approved; 2019 Approved; 2017 Approved; 2015 Approved; 2013 Approved.

Commissioner Pestana moved to approve the Connecticut State Library Affirmative Action Plan and for them to retain their biennial filing status. Commissioner Mambruno Suggs seconded. The motion carried. Yes (3); No (0); Abstentions (0).

Department of Developmental Services

Staff representing the Department of Developmental Services were Katie Rock-Burns, DDS Chief of Staff, Tommy Wilson, EEO Specialist 1.

This plan was recommended for approval based on compliance with the following: the plan contains all the elements required by sections 46a-68-78 through 46a-68-94. The agency has not met all or substantially met all of its hiring and promotional goals. No program goals were established in the prior filing. The agency demonstrated every good faith effort to achieve its goals and despite these efforts was unable to do so. The agency had no deficiencies in the prior plan review and therefore is in compliance with the (b)(4) standard.

The Goal Achievement is as follows:

- Hiring Goal Achievement: 71 out of 160 or 44%
- Promotional Goal Achievement: 11 out of 37 or 30%
- Program Goal Achievement: None

The five-year history of filing is as follows: 2021 Approved; 2020 Approved; 2019 Approved; 2018 Conditionally Approved; 2017 Conditionally Approved.

Commissioner Mambruno moved to approve the Department of Developmental Services Affirmative Action Plan and for them to retain their annual filing status. Commissioner Suggs seconded. The motion carried. Yes (3); No (0); Abstentions (0).

University of Connecticut

Staff representing the University of Connecticut were Dr. Anne D'Allewa, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, Letissa Reid, Associate Vice President and Affirmative Action Officer, Office of Institutional Equity, Renee Boggis, Executive Director of Organization Effectiveness and Workplace Culture, Human Resources, Hanna Prytko, EEO and Search Compliance Manager, Office of Institutional Equity.

This plan was recommended for approval based on compliance with the following: the plan contains all the elements required by sections 46a-68-78 through 46a-68-94. The agency has not met all or substantially met all of its hiring and promotional goals. All program goals have been achieved. The agency demonstrated every good faith effort to achieve its goals and despite these efforts has been unable to do so. The agency had no deficiencies in the prior plan review and therefore is in compliance with the (b)(4) standard.

The Goal Achievement is as follows:

- Hiring Goal Achievement: 176 out of 486 or 37%
- Promotional Goal Achievement: 27 out of 93 or 29%
- Program Goal Achievement: 3 out of 3 or 100%

The five-year history of filing is as follows: 2022 Approved; 2021 Approved; 2020 Approved; 2019 Approved; 2018 Approved.

Commissioner Pestana moved to approve the University of Connecticut Affirmative Action Plan and for them to retain their annual filing status. Commissioner Mambruno seconded. The motion carried. Yes (3); No (0); Abstentions (0).

VI. **DIVISION REPORTS**

Executive Director's Report, Executive Director Tanya Hughes.

Director Hughes updated the group on Personnel, Administrative, and other items. She highlighted information contained in her written report and announced the newly formed partnership with the United States Department of Labor Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs, and the Juneteenth March scheduled for June 17 at 10:00 AM in New Haven.

Outreach Report, Deputy Director Cheryl Sharp

Deputy Director Sharp took a moment to invite the group to join in the Juneteenth march noting that it would start at the Stetson Library in New Haven on Saturday at 10:00 AM. She noted that student participants of the Kids Court Academy would be part of the program as speakers. The KCA competition took place and thanks went out to Commissioner Giliberto for her participation. The winner of the Kids Court competition is a KCA participant. She reported that the agency is providing DEI training across the State, is waiting for the next notice of funding opportunity from HUD so engagement in community projects can continue. She further reported that the Social Media team continues getting the word out about the agency through their posts and via their DEI newsletter. The agency's work on the Holocaust film is now complete and invites will go out for the release party. Work continues with the Civil Rights Museum. Although funding was not secured this year, great contacts were made that will be beneficial in the future.

Legislative Update, Legislative and Administrative Advisor, Darcy Strand

Darcy informed that the legislative session ended last week and offered a brief overview of what occurred in the state budget as it applies to CHRO. In terms of funding the overall budget remained the same; no funding was lost. The agency received what was asked as it applies to the durational positions; they have been extended for another two years. In terms of the Agency Bill HB6638 AA revising the State's Antidiscrimination Statutes, age has been added to the 46a-58 statute, as well as an update to the definition of sexual orientation, and was passed. There were several other Bills, that impact CHRO that were also passed. She is currently putting together a final summary of all the passed Bills and will distribute once completed.

Disparity Study Update: Darcy Strand updated the group on the Disparity Study highlighting the completion of the website, the completion of the informational meetings, and the completion of the Data assessment report. She further reported on the quantitative data collection (In progress), organizational interviews (TBD), anecdotal interviews (In progress) online survey of business owners (Survey went live in June), focus groups (TBD), public hearings (TBD).

Equity Study Update: Darcy informed that Faulkner Consulting group continues to meet with executive branch agencies on their programs to conduct interviews, and analyses of the equity of their programs. Public outreach and focus groups for community-based organizations also

continues. There are also plans in place to hold a series of all-inclusive focus groups for residents to share their experiences with state government.

VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

It requires a two-thirds vote of Commissioners present and voting staff and guests invited to attend must be noted.

Commissioner Norton entertained a motion to go into Executive Session. A brief discussion ensued on reordering the agenda to have the update on the Pekah Wallace case from Assistant Attorney General, Laura Thurston take place first and then proceed with the other cases.

Commissioner Norton continued and added to the motion to invite in: Assistant Attorney General Laura Thurston for the first part of the session to update on the Pekah Wallace case. Executive Director Tanya Hughes, Deputy Director Cheryl Sharp, HRO Attorney Catherine Spain, HRO Attorney Jonathan Sykes, and Attorney Michelle Dumaskeuler. Commissioner Suggs moved the motion. Commissioner Pestana seconded. There being no further discussion the motion carried. Yes (3); No (0); Abstentions (0).

The Commission meeting reconvened at 4:34 PM. Commissioner Norton, Commissioner Mambruno, Commissioner Pestana, and Commissioner Harris returned after Executive Session.

*Commissioner Suggs left the meeting at 4:00 PM.

Commissioner Norton noted that no actions or votes were taken during the Executive Session.

VIII. VOTE ON EXECUTIVE SESSION

1. Audrah Hale v. Colt Gateway, LLC and CG Management Company, LLC
CHRO Case No. 2350083
Presented by HRO Attorney Jonathan Sykes
2. Jacqueline Gagnon v. Mansfield Housing Authority
CHRO Case No. 2350085
Presented by HRO Attorney Catherine Spain
3. Update on Pekah Wallace - Assistant Attorney General Laura Thurston

In the matter of CHRO Case No. 2350083 Audra Hale v. Colt Gateway, LLC and CG Management Commissioner Norton entertained a motion to file this case in the judicial district of Hartford to seek injunctive relief and damages. Commissioner Pestana moved the motion. Commissioner Mambruno seconded. There being no further discussion the motion carried. Yes (2); No (0); Abstentions (0).

In the matter of CHRO Case No. 2350085 Jacqueline Gagnon v. Mansfield Housing Authority II Commissioner Norton entertained a motion to file this case in the appropriate judicial district and to seek damages according to staff recommendation. Commissioner Pestana moved the motion. Commissioner Mambruno seconded. There being no further discussion the motion carried. Yes (2); No (0); Abstentions (0).

IX. NEW BUSINESS

1. Discussion of AAIANHNPI (Asian, American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, Native-Pacific Islander designations): Racial Categories in Affirmative Action Plans.
2. Discussion of Lowering College Degree Requirements for State Employment: Recommendation Regarding College Degree Requirements

Commissioner Norton gave a brief synopsis of the of the previous discussions on these topics. He added that he does not feel comfortable seeking action on the topics with only half of the Commissioners present and noted there isn't an actual proposal on the table at the moment. He then asked that the items be held on the agenda for the July meeting and invited the Commissioners to continue consideration of these topics.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF TIME AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING

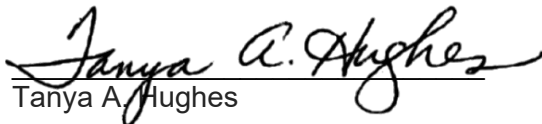
The next Commission Meeting will occur on Wednesday, July 12, 2023, at 2:00 PM via Microsoft Teams.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Norton entertained the motion to adjourn. Commissioner Pestana moved the motion. Commissioner Mambruno seconded. The motion to adjourn carried. Yes (2); No (0); Abstentions (0). The meeting adjourned at 4:47 PM.

The Minutes of the Regular Meeting dated June 14, 2023, were approved on July 12, 2023.

Prepared by:


Tanya A. Hughes