

STATE OF CONNECTICUT COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES



Regular Commission Meeting Minutes Wednesday, May 8, 2024 2:00 p.m. Via Microsoft TEAMS

Commissioners Present

Nicholas Kapoor, Chairperson
Edward Mambruno, Secretary
Sujata Gadkar-Wilcox
Lisa Giliberto
Alex Harris
Andrew Norton
Edith Pestana
Joseph Suggs
Tamara Titre

Staff Present

Tanya Hughes, Executive Director
Kimberly Jacobsen, Managing Director
Michelle Dumaskeuler, Managing Director
Jose Michael Gonzalez, Regional Manager
Robin Trepanier, HRO Attorney
Courtney Shields, HRO Attorney
Jody Walker-Smith, HRO Attorney
Spencer Hill, HRO Attorney
Neva Vigezzi, AA Supervisor, (TWR)
Darian Pitts, Executive Secretary
Leigh Russo, Secretary
Stephanie O'Loughlin, Secretary

Cheryl Sharp, Deputy Director
Jamie Rubin, Regional Manager
Shawn Burns, Regional Manager
Robert Aldi, Regional Manager
Megan Graefe, HRO Attorney
Cassandra Bretones, HRO Attorney
Jo Keogh, HRO Attorney
Libby Reinish, HRO Attorney
Gary Madison, HRO Representative
Kristen Parker, Executive Secretary
Kristina Caruso, Legal Secretary
Laura Thurston, Asst. Attorney General

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Nicholas Kapoor called the meeting to order at 2:04 PM.

II. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Commissioner Kapoor welcomed and thanked all for attending. He offered congratulations to Commissioners Harris, Gadkar-Wilcox, and Titre on their official confirmations. He noted that there was a quorum with 7 members present.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Secretary Mambruno entertained a motion to approve the Minutes of the April 10, 2024, Regular Commission Meeting as presented.

To Approve the Minutes of the April 10, 2024, Regular Commission Meeting:

Motion: E. Pestana
Second: L. Giliberto
Discussion: None

Vote:

Yes: 6 (Gadkar-Wilcox, Giliberto, Mambruno, Norton, Pestana, Suggs)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

IV. AFFIRMATIVE ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS – VOTE REQUIRED

Presented by Deputy Director Cheryl Sharp

Office of Health Strategy

Staff representing Office of Health Strategy were Chief of Staff Kim Martone, and Manager of Public Health Systems Improvement Mario Garcia.

This plan was recommended for approval based on compliance with the following: The plan does contain all elements required by Sections 46a-68-78 through 46a-94. This is the Office of Health Strategy's first filing and therefore is in compliance with the (b)(4) standard. There were no goal achievements obtained as this is their first filing.

In 2023 they were disapproved for failure to file.

To Approve the Affirmative Action Plan for the Office of Health Strategy and retain its Annual Filing Status:

Motion: E. Mambruno
Second: S. Gadkar-Wilcox
Discussion: None

Vote:

Yes: 6 (Gadkar-Wilcox, Giliberto, Mambruno, Norton, Pestana, Suggs)

No: 0

Abstain:0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

Commissioner Harris joined the meeting at 2:14 PM

Department of Social Services

Staff representing the Department of Social Services were Deputy Commissioner Shantelle Varrs, Chief of Staff Astread Ferron-Poole, Leadership Associate Anthony Spence, and Govern for America Fellow Toni Aniugo.

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 demonstrated every good faith effort to achieve 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: 85 out of 197 or 43.1%
- Promotional Goal Achievement 32 out of 53 or 43.4%
- Program Goal Achievement 2 out of 2 or 100%

The five-year approval history is as follows: 2023 Approved; 2022 Approved; 2021 Approved; 2020 Approved; 2019 Approved.

To Approve the Affirmative Action Plan for The Department of Social Services and to Retain its Annual Filing Status:

Motion: L. Giliberto

Second: E. Pestana

Discussion: None

Vote:

Yes: 7 (Gadkar-Wilcox, Giliberto, Harris, Mambruno, Norton, Pestana, Suggs)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

Department of Consumer Protection

Staff representing the Department of Consumer Protection were Commissioner Bryan Cafferelli, Deputy Commissioner Shirley Skyers-Thomas, Financial Administrative Supervisor Sonya Mathis, Human Resources Associate EEO Jeniaya Petteway, Human Resources Generalist II Raquel Perkins, Human Resource Generalist III, Maureen Magnan.

This plan was recommended for approval based on compliance with the following: the plan does contain all the elements required by sections 46a-68-78 through 46a-68-94 inclusive. The agency has met all or substantially met all of its hiring and promotion goals. No program goals were established prior to filing. 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: 25 out of 30 or 83%
- Promotional Goal Achievement 3 out of 4 or 75%

- Program Goal Achievement 0 out of 0 or 0%

The five-year history is as follows: 2022 Approved; 2020 Approved; 2018 Approved; 2016 Approved; 2014 Approved.

To Approve the Affirmative Action Plan for the Department of Consumer Protection and to retain its Biennial Filing Status:

Motion: E. Mambruno
Second: J. Suggs
Discussion: None

Vote:

Yes: 7 (Gadkar-Wilcox, Giliberto, Harris, Mambruno, Norton, Pestana, Suggs)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

V. REQUEST TO REOPEN

1. Justin Plank v. Waverly Markets, LLC d/b/a Shoprite
CHRO Case No.2440093
Presented by HRO Attorney Libby Reinish

To Disapprove the Request to Reopen for CHRO Case # 2440093 – Justin Plank v. Waverly Markets, LLC d/b/a Shoprite.

Motion: L. Giliberto
Second: A. Harris
Discussion: None

Vote:

Yes: 7 (Gadkar-Wilcox, Giliberto, Harris, Mambruno, Norton, Pestana, Suggs)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote – 1 (Kapoor)

VI. NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business to discuss.

*** Commissioner Titre joined the meeting at 2:57 PM.***

VII. DIVISION REPORTS

Executive Director's Report

Director Hughes took a moment to acknowledge the official confirmation of Commissioners Harris, Gadkar-Wilcox, Titre, and Chair Kapoor, and wished them a very long, successful tenure with the CHRO.

Director Hughes informed of ongoing recruitment activity. CHRO has been working closely with the Department of Labor, OPM, the Governor's Office, the EEO designee, as

well as BITS, who assists in getting the agency through differing Memorandum of Understandings. She noted a recent quarterly meeting held with OPH (Office of Public Hearings) Chief Referee Cherron Payne. Plans are in the works to hold a meeting with Chief Payne and Referee Jon Fitzgerald along with some of the agency's attorneys to get a better understanding of standard procedural matters.

She informed on the success of the Equity Fair held on May 1st which included over 75 different agencies and resource vendors. She took a moment to acknowledge CHRO staff and expressed how flawlessly they executed the event. Final preparations for the release of the disparity study are taking place and the agency is on track to meet the EEOC contract. Senior Leadership Team introductions were made with a note that Team meetings take place the first Friday of every month.

Each Regional Manager informed on their working histories and noted some of the activities taking place in their respective regions. Director Hughes also noted that the Senior Leadership team includes the Supervisors of Contract Compliance, Affirmative Action, and Housing Discrimination - Alvin Bingham, Neva Vigezzi, and Diane Carter, respectively.

Outreach Report

Deputy Director Sharp reiterated the success of the Equity Fair and noted new connections made with agencies who intend to partner with the CHRO. She also took a moment to thank all the Regional Managers who helped make the Fair a success.

She further reported that KCA continues to go well. More students are registering now, and connections are being made with students in the Maryland/DC area in a bid to increase the bandwidth of the program. She also noted that plans are in place to take the KCA students to DC to visit the African American Cultural Museum and the EEOC in a bid to inspire them to be civil rights activists and advocates. She further informed that one of the KCA students, Srinidhi Bala, had won the Princeton Award for Race Relations and the National World Award from the UN National Education Association making her the top student for the 20 and under category. She will also serve as an Executive Intern with the agency. The annual KCA competition will take place on June 5. The essays for both middle and high school participants are currently being reviewed. Commissioner Lisa Giliberto, along with some Superior Court Judges will serve as judges.

Deputy Director Sharp also informed the agency is involved with many different outreach events, and acknowledged the internal tech team, specifically, Spencer Hill and Jonathan Sykes for their help with getting the word out about the events via the agency's media outlets. She concluded and informed that the next event would be held on May 22 as a part of Asian Pacific Islander month celebration and invited everyone to attend. Her full written report is available for review.

Legislative Update

Legislative and Administrative Advisor, Darcy Strand was unable to attend the meeting due to her attendance at the final legislative session. Commissioner Kapoor noted that her update on Bill Tracking could be found in the meeting materials. He added that the group should expect a more comprehensive review of the Bills during the June Meeting.

Legal Update

Managing Attorney Michelle Dumas Keuler took a moment to congratulate the Commissioners on their confirmations. She then informed she would be a speaker at the CBA training.

She reported on two cases. The first was a public accommodation case that defaulted when the Respondent did not file an answer to the initial complaint. As a result, the case proceeded to the Office of Public Hearing for damages and received an award of \$35,000 for emotional distress, as well as pre and post judgement interest.

The second case, also defaulted, is an employment case where Respondent did not appear for the fact finding. The Referee awarded \$11,500 in back pay damages and \$10,000 in emotional distress damages.

VIII. ANNOUNCEMENT OF TIME AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Commission Meeting will occur on Wednesday, June 12, 2024, at 2:00 PM. This meeting will be virtual via Microsoft Teams.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

To Adjourn:

Motion: A. Norton
Second: L. Giliberto
Discussion: None

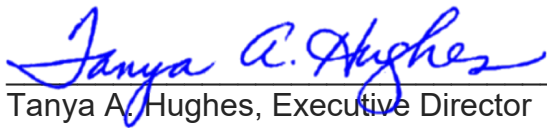
Vote

Yes: 8 (Gadkar-Wilcox, Giliberto, Harris, Mambruno, Norton, Pestana, Suggs, Titre)
No: 0
Abstain: 0

The meeting adjourned at 3:06 PM.

The Minutes of the regular Commission Meeting dated May 8, 2024, were approved on June 12, 2024.

Prepared by:



Tanya A. Hughes, Executive Director