

Human Rights Board  
Pinellas County  
June 14, 2022 Meeting Minutes

The Human Rights Board (HRB) met in regular session at 10:00 AM on this date in the Clerk's Fourth Floor Conference Room at the Pinellas County Courthouse, 315 Court Street, Clearwater, Florida.

Present

Charles W. Thomas, Chair, Tax Collector  
Mike Twitty, Vice-Chair, Property Appraiser  
Lisa Arispe, Employees' Advisory Council Representative  
Ken Burke, Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller  
Kimberly Crum, Human Resources Director (late arrival)  
Karen Williams Seel, County Commissioner

Members with Designee Present

Barry Burton, County Administrator – Rodney Marion

Not Present

Julie Marcus, Supervisor of Elections  
Jeff Rohrs, Chief Information Officer, Business Technology Services  
Joan Vecchioli, Unified Personnel Board Representative

Others Present

Jeffery Lorick, Office of Human Rights (OHR) Director  
Keiah Townsend, Assistant County Attorney  
Betina Baron, Human Rights Compliance Manager  
Sarah Rathke, Board Reporter, Deputy Clerk  
Other interested individuals

*All documents provided to the Clerk's Office have been made a part of the record.*

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Thomas called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM.

Responding to queries by the members, staff indicated that the Board agenda packet will be sent out for review prior to the next meeting; whereupon, Mr. Lorick provided information regarding the City of St. Petersburg's ordinance relating to a lawful source of income.

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES – DECEMBER 14, 2021**

Mr. Burke recommended a change on page five to replace “Vice Chair” with “Vice Chair Mike Twitty”, and Mr. Lorick requested an additional correction on page four regarding 40 internal complaints, with the correct number being 20. Ms. Arispe made a motion that the minutes be approved as corrected. The motion was seconded by Mr. Twitty and passed unanimously.

In response to a query by Mr. Burke, staff related that the Board meetings are publicly noticed; and that staff is working toward posting the agenda on the department’s website. Mr. Lorick noted that part of the delay in uploading documents to the website is caused by the document remediation to ensure accessibility.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

No one appeared in response to Chair Thomas’ call for public comment.

Deviating from the agenda, Mr. Lorick updated the Board on the department’s budget proposal for Fiscal Year (FY) 2023, indicating that it is in line with previous years’ budgets; that it reflects a slight increase in expenditures and a decrease in revenues over the FY22 budget; and that the Board of County Commissioners is scheduled to consider it on June 23.

A motion was made by Mr. Twitty to approve the Human Rights Department’s proposed budget for FY 2023. The motion was seconded by Mr. Marion and passed unanimously.

Mr. Lorick related that he and his staff will be attending the International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies in Los Angeles; and that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) will reimburse the trip expenses from its travel fund.

## **EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION (EEOC) EXECUTED WORKSHARE AGREEMENT/ UPDATE**

Mr. Lorick indicated that the department has entered into workshare agreements with its federal partners, EEOC and HUD for payment of case processing; that the contract will be submitted to the EEOC in mid-June for payment of 50% of the department’s income;

and that staff is on track to meet its contractual obligations. He noted that the EEOC has recently approved an increase in investigation expense reimbursement; and that the department has applied for an additional funding opportunity in order to provide community outreach.

## **HUD**

Mr. Lorick indicated that the department has a Memorandum of Understanding and a workshare agreement with the agency and provided an update on the following topics:

- The complaint processing period
- Human Rights Department's contracted amount of investigations
- HUD leadership changes and the consequential impacts
- Contractual payments to the department for training and various case processing

Responding to queries by Chair Thomas, Mr. Lorick explained that the department assisted the County Administrator's Office in developing a Tenant's Bill of Rights to distribute to citizens to inform them of their rights. He indicated that the department handles matters of housing discrimination; and that it does not have the ability to implement rent controls.

Responding to queries by Mr. Burke, Mr. Lorick indicated that staff would resend a HUD audit report from the December Board packet to the members for further review; and that all findings have been corrected; whereupon, he provided information regarding a HUD requirement for uploading information to the HUD Enforcement Management System database (HEMS), and Ms. Baron explained the department's efforts in meeting the HUD's evolving reporting standards.

## **AFFIRMATIVE ACTION COMMITTEE**

Mr. Lorick indicated that a request was made by the Florida Attorney General's Office regarding an Affirmative Action Plan; and that the department has been working in conjunction with the County Attorney's Office to fulfill the request.

Attorney Townsend indicated that there is an Ordinance allowing the County to have an Affirmative Action Committee, the purpose of which was to develop the plan; but that historical knowledge regarding it is missing; whereupon, Mr. Burke related background information on the matter, and Mr. Twitty indicated that he would send the records he has regarding the Committee to OHR.

## **FEDERAL REPORT EE04/ UTILIZATION REPORT**

Mr. Lorick provided information regarding the reports' due dates and status of their approval; whereupon, he explained the purpose of the utilization report and indicated that the necessary information has been provided to the appropriate County departments that need it in order to apply for grants.

## **ADA TRANSITIONAL UPDATE PLAN**

Ms. Baron related that the staff has met with the Appointing Authorities' liaisons to review and discuss the transitional plan, its requirements, and expectations for collaboration. Mr. Lorick noted that County departments have been provided with a requirements checklist; and that staff will continue working on the plan to complete it over the next year.

## **IN-SERVICE DAY**

The item was not addressed.

## **EMPLOYEE VOICE SURVEY RESULTS**

Mr. Lorick explained that at the time the last Employee Voice Survey was conducted, there was a lot of uncertainty within the department due to the impacts of COVID-19 and a transition in leadership, which negatively impacted the survey results. He indicated that the department has taken steps towards improvement; and that three new staff members have been added.

Mr. Lorick invited Ms. Baron to address the Board; whereupon, she provided an overview of the steps taken, which included a roundtable discussion with Human Resources, teambuilding exercise, and more.

## **EDUCATION AND OUTREACH ACTIVITY**

Mr. Lorick highlighted the following matters:

- Education opportunities for County employees
- Community events
- Countywide diversity dashboard
- Limited English Proficiency plan

## **DISCUSSION**

Mr. Lorick responded to various queries by the members and staff and recapped requests made by the members earlier in the meeting, and brief discussion ensued; whereupon, Mr. Burke recommended that a Board meeting tab be added to the Office of Human Rights website.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was made by Ms. Crum to adjourn the meeting at 10:49 AM; whereupon, the motion was seconded by Mr. Burke and passed unanimously.