

**Human Rights Board
Pinellas County
March 12, 2024 Meeting Minutes**

The Human Rights Board (HRB) met in regular session at 10:02 AM on this date in the Fifth Floor Conference Room at the Office of Human Rights (OHR), 400 South Fort Harrison Avenue, 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
Wade Childress, Chief Human Resources (HR) Officer
René Flowers, County Commissioner
Rodney Marion, representing Barry A. Burton, County Administrator
Ralph Reid, representing Ricardo Davis, Unified Personnel Board (UPB) Representative
Peggy Rowe, Interim Director, HR
Dana Zordan, representing Jeff Rohrs, Chief Information Officer, Business Technology Services (BTS)

Not Present

Barry A. Burton, County Administrator
Ricardo Davis, UPB Representative
Julie Marcus, Supervisor of Elections
Jeff Rohrs, Chief Information Officer, BTS

Others Present

Jeffery Lorick, Director, OHR
Betina Baron, Compliance Manager, OHR
Carol Strickland, Administrative Support Specialist, OHR
Keiah Townsend, Assistant County Attorney
Shirley Westfall, 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/ATTENDANCE

Chair Thomas called the meeting to order at 10:02 AM; whereupon, Ms. Strickland conducted a roll call of the members and others present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – SEPTEMBER 12, 2023 MEETING

Mr. Twitty made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 12 meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Arispe and carried unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Lorick indicated that there are no members of the public present.

BUDGET

Mr. Lorick welcomed everyone in attendance, indicating that staff is currently involved in the budget review process; and that the budget will be presented for approval at the next HRB meeting.

Later in the meeting, and in response to queries by Mr. Burke, Mr. Lorick indicated that the budget will be brought to the HRB for approval following meetings with the Office of Management and the County Administrator; that some line items from the 2024 budget have been broken into separate categories in the 2025 budget; and that some of the line items were not listed correctly and created problems related to the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) audit.

Mr. Burke requested that income be specified with regard to the amount which is funded by the County and the amount of anticipated revenue from other entities.

Responding to additional queries by the members, Mr. Lorick, with input by Ms. Strickland, provided information related to the *Other Contractual Services*, *Legal*, and *Travel and Per Diem* line items; whereupon, following a clarification provided by Ms. Strickland, Mr. Burke indicated that he would like for the *Legal* line item to indicate that the fees paid are for the use of external attorneys.

ANTI-HARASSMENT UPDATE

Mr. Lorick briefly discussed the update to the anti-harassment policy, noting that staff was tasked to work on the standard operating procedure related to investigations; and that the procedure is now being vetted by the County Attorney's Office; whereupon, Attorney Townsend provided information regarding the approval process for the policy, including that it has not yet been adopted by the UPB; and that it will be presented to the HRB for approval at its next meeting.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES FY23

Referring to a document included in the agenda packet titled *Annual Report 2023*, Mr. Lorick reviewed the number of inquiries and cases regarding fair housing, employment, public accommodation, and internal matters, noting one complicated housing case that has not been resolved and which may require the commitment of more funds to assist with obtaining an attorney who will accept the case or for taking the case to court; whereupon, he, with input by Ms. Baron, responded to queries by the members.

Mr. Lorick provided information regarding mediation and conciliation cases related to Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), HUD, wage theft, and public accommodation matters, indicating that OHR, as part of its contractual obligations with the EEOC and HUD, participated in over 50 outreach and training activities. He discussed revenue received from EEOC and HUD in 2023 and statistics related to usage of the LanguageLine and TDD accommodation line.

Mr. Lorick provided a brief update regarding the recent successful recertification process through HUD, noting that there was significant improvement from the last assessment; whereupon, Ms. Baron indicated that the OHR team has made many adjustments and changes since the last assessment; and that only one of nine performance standards was not met, detailing steps being taken to improve processes related to the unmet standard.

In response to a query by Mr. Burke, Mr. Lorick indicated that approximately 24% of the OHR budget is funded by the County.

UNDERUTILIZATION REPORT/EEO4 AND APPROVAL MEMO

Mr. Lorick related that an approval letter has been received regarding the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Plan Underutilization Report for Pinellas County and noted that another report will be due in December. He related that the report, which was previously completed internally, will now need involvement from other County departments in order to comply with more robust reporting requirements; whereupon, he specified that the report addresses the ways that an organization ensures equal employment opportunities for all groups of people, and a brief discussion ensued.

Mr. Burke suggested that it would be helpful to be provided a breakdown of worker types by Appointing Authority; whereupon, Mr. Lorick indicated that BTS is creating a diversity dashboard; and that Ms. Baron is working with them to create reports which will provide real-time racial and gender demographics for each department. Responding to queries by Mr. Reid, Ms. Baron, with input by Mr. Lorick, provided information related to the software that is being utilized and its capabilities.

Mr. Lorick referenced the EEO4 report, noting that it not only includes the same data and gender information, but also salary bands; and that the full reports for both the Underutilization and EEO4 are available upon request.

EMPLOYEE SURVEY RESULTS

Deviating from the order of the agenda, Mr. Lorick, with input by Ms. Baron, provided information regarding the improved employee survey results and related that they have worked extremely hard over the past two years to improve employee communications, camaraderie, and transparency with their team.

Messrs. Burke and Thomas commended their efforts, success, and progress.

FAIR HOUSING MONTH

Mr. Lorick provided information regarding the Fair Housing Month event to be held in Tampa in April and thanked Mr. Twitty and the Property Appraiser's Department for their partnership and collaboration through outreach for the event.

At the request of Mr. Lorick, Ms. Baron provided an update of the Council for Persons with Disabilities, including an initiative to communicate with the County's Parks and Conservation Resources Department related to new construction and accessibility within the parks, and that the Council would like for its Chair, Jody Armstrong, to attend a BCC meeting to present a five-year report.

Mr. Lorick provided information related to the investigative team's successful efforts to resolve discrimination and accessibility issues, noting that more businesses are becoming client-compliant regarding Americans with Disabilities' Act requirements.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Following the introduction of the item by Mr. Lorick, Mr. Burke nominated Mr. Twitty to serve as Chair and Commissioner Flowers to serve as Vice-Chair. Hearing no further nominations, Chair Thomas confirmed with Mr. Twitty and Commissioner Flowers their acceptance of the nominations. Upon the Chair's call for a vote, the nominations passed unanimously.

Mr. Thomas expressed that it has been an honor to serve as Chair; and that it has been a blessing getting to know Mr. Lorick.

DISCUSSION

Commissioner Flowers commended Messrs. Burke, Twitty, and Thomas for their efforts to publicize employment opportunities within their offices.

Mr. Lorick thanked the Board for their continued support.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Thomas adjourned the meeting at 10:46 AM.