



CITY OF COLUMBIA

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION 2016 ANNUAL REPORT

MARCH 8, 2017

Current Members

Scott Dean (Chair)

Zach Rubin (Vice Chair)

Andrea Waner (Secretary)

Persephone Dakopolos

Amanda Hinnant

Stacye Smith

Term Expiration

March 1, 2019

March 1, 2019

March 1, 2020

March 1, 2018

March 1, 2020

March 1, 2018

Members who recently resigned or had their term expire:

Amanda Andrade – Term expired March 1, 2016

Elizabeth Miller – Resigned June 7, 2016

Jenna Liu – Resigned July 8, 2016

Danielle Muscato – Resigned December 2016

Dalton Calcote – Term expired March 1, 2017

Chad McLaurin – Term expired March 1, 2017

Staff Liaison

Rose Wibbenmeyer Assistant City Counselor, Law Department

History of the Formation of the Columbia Human Rights Commission:

The City of Columbia first established the Human Rights Commission in 1974. The HRC was originally given powers to conduct administrative hearings and redress violations by ordering appropriate relief (including cease and desist orders, reinstating employment or granting back pay). In 1990, the Missouri Supreme Court issued an opinion in *Yellow Freight Systems, Inc. V. Mayor's Commission on Human Rights*, 791 S.W.2d 382 (1990) which made it clear the City's commission was operating beyond its constitutional limits. The City Council then established a task force to make recommendations on the future of the commission. In 1991, the City Council restructured the commission based on the recommendations of the task force. The current duties of the Human Rights Commission are set forth in Section 12-18 of the City Code. It provides:

The commission shall have the following functions, powers and duties:

- (1) To formulate and carry out educational programs designed to minimize or eliminate those discriminatory practices made unlawful by Article III of this chapter.
- (2) To receive complaints alleging any discriminatory practices made unlawful by Article III of this chapter.
- (3) To endeavor to eliminate discriminatory practices made unlawful by Article III of this chapter by conference, conciliation and persuasion.
- (4) To provide mediation services to resolve incidences of alleged discriminatory practices made unlawful by Article III of this chapter.
- (5) To cooperate with other organizations, private and public, to discourage discrimination.
- (6) To encourage fair treatment for all persons regardless of age as it relates to employment, race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or familial status as it relates to housing.
- (7) To advise the city council on human rights issues.
- (8) To hold public hearings on the state of human rights and relations in the city and on specific human rights issues.
- (9) To sponsor or initiate specifically targeted workshops and on-going programs to improve human relations and to decrease tensions in the city.
- (10) To present informational programs on human rights to school, business, service and other organizations.

(11) To adopt rules, regulations and guidelines pertaining to the investigation and disposition of complaints consistent with the provisions of this chapter.

(12) To make recommendations to the city manager for funding human rights enhancement activities.

Section 12-18, City Code of Ordinances.

In December of 2014, the City of Columbia adopted ordinance number 22286, which prohibits with limited exceptions an employer from inquiring, questioning or otherwise seeking information on an employment application as to whether an individual has ever been arrested for, charged with or convicted of any crime until after the applicant has received a conditional offer of employment. The Human Rights Commission is also charged with receiving and investigating ban the box complaints.

The Human Rights Commission (HRC) is dedicated to minimizing or eliminating discriminatory practices made unlawful by Chapter 12. It is comprised of seven (7) volunteer members, each appointed by Council to three (3) year terms. The HRC receives discrimination complaints from the public for investigation, mediation or referral to a state or federal agency. It also participates in outreach activities and makes recommendations on funding of human rights enhancement programs to raise awareness and improve human relations in the community.

The membership of the commission consists of seven residents of the city appointed by the City Council. All members have demonstrated a strong commitment to human rights and a belief in the principles of equal opportunity. Currently, the commission consists of Scott Dean, Zach Rubin, Stacye Smith, Persephone Dakopolos, Carley Gomez, Amanda Hinnant, and Andrea Waner. Other citizens whose terms ended in 2016 and early 2017, prior to approval of this report, include Amanda Andrade, Elizabeth Miller, Danielle Muscato, Jenna Liu, Dalton Calcote, and Chad McLaurin.

COMPLAINTS AND INQUIRIES:

Complaints:

In 2016, the Human Rights Commission received five (5) complaints alleging violations of Chapter 12 of the City Code of Ordinances. All five were administratively closed as detailed below.

HRC 2016-0001 The complainant alleged housing discrimination related to the landlord requiring a security deposit for a service animal. The landlord responded to the complaint and indicated that the complainant would be allowed to keep the service animal without a security deposit. Based upon the landlord's compliance efforts and with the complainant's consent, the commission administratively closed the complaint.

HRC 2016-0002 The complaint alleged discrimination in public accommodation based upon disability. The complaint was referred to mediation. The mediator notified the city that the parties were able to reach an agreement. At the complainant's request after mediation, the case was administratively closed by the commission.

HRC 2016-0003 The complaint alleged a ban the box violation against a business. The business was informed of the ordinance requirements and updated its application to comply with the ordinance. After the business obtained compliance, the commission voted to administratively close the complaint.

HRC 2016-0004 The complaint alleged a ban the box violation against a business. The business was informed of the ordinance requirements and updated its application to comply with the ordinance. The commission administratively closed the complaint after the business obtained compliance with the ordinance.

HRC 2016-0005 The complaint alleged discrimination in employment based upon race, sexual orientation, and color. The complainant also alleged retaliation. The case was administratively closed by staff because all events occurred in another jurisdiction outside the city limits of Columbia, Missouri.

Inquiries:

An inquiry is when a member of the public has an allegation or question about Chapter 12 violations but the person has not yet filed a formal written complaint. Staff handles each inquiry. Citizens are provided with personal responses specific to their questions, informed of their options for filing a complaint, and provided with contact information for any future questions. During 2016, the Law Department received and responded to thirty-nine (39) inquiries.

2016 Activities:

Human Rights Enhancement Program:

The HRC's goal is to eliminate discriminatory practices, to carry out educational programs and to cooperate with other organizations to further this purpose. Pursuant to Section 12-19 of the City Code, the HRC recommends funding for Human Rights Enhancement activities in our community to be sponsored by the City and assists in coordinating these events. In 2016, the HRC recommended funding for the following Human Rights Enhancement activities. Each grant is limited to no more than \$500.00.

The City's Human Rights Enhancement Program provided funding to the following organizations and events following a recommendation by the Human Rights Commission:

The Human Rights Commission requested that HREP funding be used to pay for the expenses associated with the keynote speaker, president and CEO of Deaconess Foundation and co-chair of the Ferguson Commission Rev. Starsky Wilson, and to pay for the Diversity Awards for the Columbia Values Diversity Program for the 2016 Columbia Values Diversity Community Celebration. In addition, the Human Rights Commission has again requested that HREP funding be used to sponsor the speaker and the awards for the 2017 program. Five hundred dollars of HREP funding will be used to pay expenses associated with the costs of the awards and of the speaker Naomi Tutu.

The Human Rights Commission also provided three grants to the Columbia Public Schools. Two grants funded the Venerable Champa Lhunpo to speak to Hickman High School students about the human rights crisis in Tibet in 2015 and in 2016. Another grant was used to fund the 2016 World Religion Series. The World Religion Series provides a free educational

opportunity for the community to learn about religion as a part of culture, in nine two hour sessions. Attendees learn about concern for the holy, community, ritual, scripture and ethical code of eight (8) prominent world religions being practiced in Columbia. In addition to these eight (8) religions, there will a final session to cover other religions and beliefs that do not fall within these eight (8) major world religions. Mr. Frissell presented and moderated each session along with a practitioner or scholar from each of the religions to present and answer questions.

The commission also recommended funding be used to support a film screening of “120 Days” and to support the Third Goal Film Festival. The film screening of 120 Days was presented by the Masters of Public Health Graduate Student Association and received \$300 of HREP funding. The Central Missouri Returned Peace Corps Volunteers received \$500 in HREP funding to support the 2016 Third Goal Film Fest. Mid-Mo LGBT Coalition received \$200 in HREP funding to support an informational booth and safe place for people seeking information about coming out at Pride Fest.

Other Events and Activities:

The Human Rights Commission also assisted with the City of Columbia’s Fair Housing and Lending Seminar, April 8, 2016, and is now planning for the 2017 Fair Housing and Lending Seminar to be held on April 7, 2017. The Commission also assisted in planning the May 3, 2016 Race and Equity Forum. The Commission conducted outreach at Earth Day and at Pride Fest. Chair Scott Dean appeared on KOPN to promote fair housing and human rights on April 4, 2016 and is scheduled again for April 3, 2017. Scott Dean also provided a presentation to the Boy Scout University, and a presentation to a law and social work class at the University of Missouri. Scott Dean also worked with the University on a video segment on housing discrimination.

The commission hosted public presentations by Mark Kirchhoff, Outreach Case Manager of Homeless Youth Program at Rainbow House. (January 2016 and November, 2016); by Steve Hollis on the homelessness summit; Alissa Jett, on Refugee and Immigration Services; Gretchen Maune on paid medical leave and reproductive nondiscrimination; and Lt. Barb Buck on the police department’s proposed changes to Chapter 13.

The Commission aided the City in working with the Human Rights Campaign to achieve our highest score on the Municipal Equality Index thus far; 92 points. This score represents the third highest score for a city in the state of Missouri. Additionally, the score represents a 22-point gain from just 2 years ago (previously 70 in 2014).

The Commission continues to work closely with the Youth Advisory Council, the Disabilities Commission, the Columbia Values Diversity Committee, and the Citizens Police Review Board. Its regular monthly meetings feature reports of the work of these different groups. In addition, the Commission is involved in the work of the Sharp End Committee related to the development of the African American Heritage Trail.

Conclusion:

The Commission looks forward to a productive 2017, continuing our charge to endeavor to eliminate discriminatory practices, encourage fair treatment of all persons, and provide a venue for public conversation around human rights issues. We invite you to attend any of our meetings. Thank you for your previous support as well as your assistance into the future.