



City of Albuquerque - Office of Civil Rights  
1 Civic Plaza, Albuquerque, NM 87102  
Phone- 505-768-4595, TTY 711  
[civilrights@cabq.gov](mailto:civilrights@cabq.gov)

## **City of Albuquerque Human Rights Board Minutes**

Date/Time: Tuesday, September 15, 2020 starting at 4:30 pm (MST)  
Location: Zoom  
Contact: Crystal Velarde, 505-768-4544

### **Board Members Present:**

Adrien Lawyer, Vice-Chair  
Douglas Alsup  
Samia Assed  
Michael Jefferson  
Sradha Patel

### **City Staff Present**

Lara Christensen, Board Attorney  
Esteban Aguilar Jr., City Attorney  
Michelle Melendez, Director of Office of Equity & Inclusion  
Crystal Velarde, Program Coordinator Office of Civil Rights

### **Board Members Not Present**

Joan Yazze-Gallegos

#### **I. Call to Order**

- a. The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Lawyer at approximately 4:38 pm.

#### **II. Approval of Agenda**

- a. Member Jefferson moved to add a committee report from the research subcommittee between item 7 (Presentment, discussion, and vote on adoption of Human Rights Board Investigation Procedures concerning complaints received by the Board) and 8 (Discuss & Vote on Chair & Vice Chair positions for the remaining 2020 year). Acting Chair Lawyer did a roll call vote and the motion was passed unanimously. Agenda was also approved as amended.

#### **III. Approval of Minutes from July 21, 2020**

- a. Acting Chair Lawyer called for unanimous consent to approve the July 21, 2020, minutes as written. There was no objection therefore the minutes from July 21, 2020, were approved as written.

#### **IV. Public Comment**

- a. Rosemary Blanchard shared her concerns regarding homelessness in the area of her faith community. She stated the city has talked to her faith community about sanctions due to the homeless people on the property. Therefore, she would like to see more resources available for the homeless and would like the Human Rights Board to help them if possible.
  - i. Acting Chair Lawyer thanked Ms. Blanchard for sharing her concerns with the Board. He further stated he believed the City is currently in an implementation phase around a new facility to deliver services to homeless

people. City Attorney Aguilar stated there are a couple of initiatives the City currently has around this issue. One is the creation of the Albuquerque Community Safety Department and the City is also working on a new shelter. Ms. Melendez also shared the City Emergency Operations Center has placed 25 porta-potties and handwashing stations throughout the city.

**V. Presentment, discussion and vote on Letter of Support for the Transit Board Resolution. Presentment, discussion, and vote on Mr. Watson’s proposed Resolution on behalf of the Human Rights Board condemning the arrival of federal agents to the City of Albuquerque**

- a. Transit Board Resolution Presented by Christopher Ramirez
  - i. In July, the Transit Advisory Board passed a resolution calling on the City to stop using public transit (ABQ Ride buses and SunVan) to transport officers to protests.
    1. The resolution was submitted to the Mayor’s office as well as City Council who are taking the resolution into account.
  - ii. Acting Chair Lawyer moved to pass a resolution modeled on the Transit Advisory Board’s resolution condemning the use of transit resources for policing. Motion was seconded by Member Alsup. The motion was unanimously approved.
- b. Mr. Devont’e Watson’s proposed resolution on behalf of the Human Rights Board, condemning the arrival of federal agents to the City of Albuquerque.
  - i. Mr. Watson was unavailable for comment when this item was initially called. Acting Chair Lawyer moved to recall this item later in the meeting. Motion was seconded by Member Assed. The motion was unanimously approved.

**VI. Presentment, discussion, and vote on Human Rights Board Request to City Council to consider a proposed ordinance banning the display of Confederate and/or similar monuments within the City of Albuquerque as a violation of human rights**

- a. Discussion included City Attorney Aguilar and Board Attorney Christensen sharing the different ways information can be submitted to City Council. Member Assed and Member Jefferson initially volunteered to present the proposed ordinance at a council meeting. However, City Attorney Aguilar shared they may want to talk to City Council before appearing at a meeting. This would allow for City Council to add the proposed ordinance to their agenda. He also informed the Board the City is in the middle of the budget cycle and this may result in delays. City Attorney Aguilar informed the Board he would help them connect with City Council but was also aware Member Jefferson was in contact with Councilor Benton. Acting Chair Lawyer stated they would work out the details later and asked if there was a motion.
- b. Member Jefferson moved to send the recommendation to City Council for action. Acting Chair Lawyer called for a roll call vote. Motion was unanimously passed to send the recommendation to City Council as written.

**VII. Presentment, discussion, and vote on adoption of Human Rights Board Investigation Procedures concerning complaints received by the Board**

- a. Member Jefferson presented Human Rights Board Procedures for Investigations and a Human Rights Recommendation Form for review and adoption by the Board.
- b. Members Jefferson moved to adopt the procedures and the form for the Board's use. Acting Chair Lawyer called for a roll call vote and the motion was unanimously passed.

**VIII. Research and Investigation Subcommittee Report**

- a. Member Jefferson stated the subcommittee does not feel that the Civilian Police Oversight Agency (CPOA) addresses human rights. Therefore, the subcommittee recommends the Board hold a public hearing in accordance with the Human Rights Ordinance where they must give a 30-day notice and they contact witnesses. Member Jefferson stated they should call the current Acting Chief Medina of the Albuquerque Police Department (APD) as a witness to educate the public and the Board about APD's procedures and policies and how they relate to human rights. Member Jefferson would like to vote on this issue at the next Human Rights Board meeting on November 17, 2020.

**IX. Discuss & Vote on Chair & Vice Chair positions for the remaining 2020 year**

- a. Chair:
  - i. Adrien Lawyer accepts the Chair position by acclamation for the remainder of the year.
- b. Vice Chair:
  - i. Member Assed nominated Member Jefferson as Vice Chair for the remainder of the year. No objections were made. Member Jefferson was appointed Vice Chair by acclamation.

**X. Director's Report**

- a. Office of Civil Rights (OCR)
  - i. A report was sent out prior to the meeting for the members to review. It included statistics for the time period of July 16, 2020 to September 9, 2020 as well as events planned by the office.
  - ii. OCR has handled 70 distinct inquiries during that time period.
    1. Type: Public Accommodation – 20, Employment – 14, Housing 16, and Other -16.
    2. Category: Age – 1, Disability – 19, Gender – 3, Ancestry – 1, Retaliation – 3, Race – 14. Sexual Harassment – 1, Sexual Orientation – 3, National Origin – 1, Ethnicity – 1, Other – 12, Non-Discrimination - 27
  - iii. OCR provided updates on 3 pending complaints, 1 completed complaint, and 1 planned complaint.

iv. Outreach included:

1. Assisted the Department of Family and Community Services in communicating with local emergency shelters regarding protections for transgender persons at the City and State level.
2. Ongoing – Chair of Domestic Violence Task Force
3. Ongoing –Attending bi-monthly Albuquerque Affordable Housing Coalition meetings to provide input on discriminatory housing practices.
4. Ongoing – Assisting with the development of the Albuquerque Community Safety Department with a focus on law and policy
5. Ongoing – Attending weekly Immigrant/Refugee COVID-19 planning sessions (coordinated by OIRA)
6. Ongoing – Serving on the steering committee for the establishment of the New Mexico Supreme Court Commission on Equity and Justice.
7. 7/29/20 – Served as a panelist at a community forum regarding Operation Legend.
8. 7/31/20 - ADA 30th Anniversary Session - Service Animals (co-sponsored by OCR)
9. 8/21/20 –Presented on Racial Justice and the Law at the Civil Legal Services Annual Conference.
10. 8/26/20 – Presented to MBA students at the University of Arkansas presentation regarding why governments should be more diverse and focused on equity and anti-racism.

v. Upcoming Outreach

1. 9/18/20 – Presentation to Walmart Home Office Executives regarding racism and changes their organization can make.
2. 9/19/20 – Co-sponsoring a CLE - Bostock v. Clayton County Supreme Court Ruling and Implications on LGBTQ Employment Law
3. 9/24/20 – Co-hosting a Racial Healing and History Project Convening.
4. 10/15/20 – Panelist at a Virtual Get out the Vote event hosted by the Anti-Racism Training Institute of the Southwest
5. 10/26/20 – Presenting to University of Arkansas School of Law students regarding careers in public service.
6. 10/30/20 – Co-presenting a CLE session on Voting (to cover historical and current voter suppression and voting rights) with Professor Vinay Harpalani at the Committee on Diversity Annual Diversity Symposium
7. 11/18/20, 11/19/20, and 11/19/20 – CLE Series hosted by New Mexico Black Lawyers (OCR co-sponsoring)

- vi. Ms. Velarde explained that the case length is impacted by several factors including that Complainants have asked to pause due to COVID. Additionally, OCR has sent the cases to formal mediation through the Alternative Dispute and Resolution (ADR) office and they are currently holding mediation online only. This has been explained to Complainants as well as Respondents and they are in agreement to go through ADR.
- b. Office of Equity & Inclusion (OEI)
  - i. OEI held a virtual event to kick off Hispanic Heritage Month and are gearing up for Indigenous People's Day and Native American History Month.
  - ii. OEI also has new staff on board which include Carolina Romero and Vanessa Gonzalez who are covering Mariela Ruiz-Angel's position. Ms. Melendez has also hired a new Communications and Public Information Officer and has two new interns from the National Indian Youth Council. The office also has a new African American Community and Business Liaison Scott Carruthers.
  - iii. OEI is co-hosting bilingual town halls with Councilor Sena. These town halls are being held in Chinese, Vietnamese, and Spanish.
  - iv. OEI presented a resolution to City Council to strengthen and re-affirm the City's commitment to racial equity and social justice. The resolution was co-sponsored by City Councilors Peña, Borrego and Sena and passed unanimously.
  - v. This week is Welcoming America week. OEI signed onto a national letter urging the federal administration to resume accepting and settling refugees. They reiterated our City's commitment to be a resettlement city.
  - vi. OEI is also working with OCR to do a promotional campaign to raise awareness in the community about our offices.
  - vii. OEI's Race and Equity Data Analyst created a robust data dashboard that shows areas of town with high social vulnerability and other indicators such as poverty and racial backgrounds. Ms. Melendez believes this is where resources should be concentrated. She has shared this information with Senior Affairs so they can better serve the people of our community. They are also tracking eviction data and looking for patterns during this pandemic.
  - viii. Ms. Melendez apologize for not having a written report but referred the Board to OEI's newsletters for all updates.

**XI. Recall of V. b. Mr. Watson's proposed resolution on behalf of the Human Rights Board, condemning the arrival of federal agents to the City of Albuquerque**

- a. Mr. Watson was still not available for comment.
- b. Members shared they had received information regarding the federal agents and their interactions with the community. However, specifics were not shared. City

Attorney Aguilar encouraged Board members to come forward with specific information on any incidents taking place around the city.

- c. Board members reviewed the proposed resolution and made some edits.
  - i. City Attorney Aguilar suggested members submit amendments for review instead of editing live.
- d. A vote on the proposed resolution will be held at the November 17, 2020 meeting.

**XII. Adjournment**

- a. Chair Lawyer adjourned the meeting at 6:43 pm.

---

Adrien Lawyer, Chair

---

Date