



# City of La Crosse, Wisconsin

City Hall  
400 La Crosse Street  
La Crosse, WI 54601

## Meeting Minutes

### Human Rights Commission

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Wednesday, September 20, 2017

5:15 PM

5th Floor Conference Room

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#### Call to Order

*The meeting was called to order by Chair Fabio Burgos at 5:16 p.m.*

#### Roll Call

**Present:** 6 - Ashley Lacenski, Fabio Burgos, Shaundel Spivey, Will Van Roosenbeek, Elizabeth Digby-Britten, Rose Reinert

**Excused:** 1 - Vacant 1

#### Approval of Minutes

A motion was made to approve the August 23, 2017 meeting minutes with corrections to Elizabeth Digby-Britten and Rose Reinert's name spellings. The motion carried by voice vote.

#### Agenda Items:

1. [17-1318](#) Complaint filed by Genean Thomas vs. City of La Crosse Housing Authority
  - Receipt by Commission and notice to respondent
  - Consideration of preliminary investigation
  - Determination as to whether there is probable cause for hearing
  - Scheduling of proceedings

*(Note: The Board may convene in closed session pursuant to Wis. Stats. sec. 19.85(1) (a) regarding deliberating a case which is the subject of a quasi-judicial body. Following any closed session, the Board may reconvene in open session.)*

*Chair Fabio Burgos noted the HRC should only determine probable cause today per City Attorney's office and also there is no need to go into closed session. Fabio defined probable cause for the HRC's reference. Ashley Lacenski noted it appeared there was a part missing in the complaint after page 1, noting clerk verified what she had. Burgos inquired if all the commissioners had reviewed the complaint and all affirmed they had. Burgos noted alleged discrimination occurred in the City of La Crosse. Shaundel Spivey noted the city planner's email on the attorney's recommendation to determine probable cause. Burgos called for a roll call vote on the complaint and the commissioners voted unanimously that there was probable cause for a hearing. Burgos noted in the municipal code section 22.25(a)(6) as the reason for probable cause for a hearing.*

*Spivey inquired why the HRC can't take action today; Fabio noted the clerk notification process and protocol.*

2. [17-1004](#) Update on letter to school district following complaint filed by Elizabeth Digby-Britten
- This item will be on the next agenda. No action taken.*
3. [17-1147](#) Discuss Housing Authority issues, including denials, application process, accommodation and possibility of updating raw data regarding applicant denials.
- Spivey noted the HRC was to review data and make comments. Burgos noted data is incomplete. Burgos noted a meeting with the Mayor and Planning to review action plan.*
- A motion was made by Burgos, seconded by Reinert, to invite public comment on this issue. The motion carried by voice vote.*
- Burgos asked Julia McDermid on how to obtain data. McDermid recommended putting request in writing and addressed to the Housing Authority Board with data requested back 5 to 10 years. Burgos noted this is not adversarial, but a role of the HRC and that the HRC doesn't have a legal mechanism to force release of data.*
- Kim Crocker and Jane Alberts are meeting with new director of the La Crosse Collaborative to look at an MOU with landlords to lower application criteria and to make applications available online with a social services representative.*
- A citizen mentioned FOIA request could be used as authorities are subject to FOIA laws except personal ID data. Rose Reinert noted the HRC audits may seem combative when it doesn't need to be - it is more to look for areas of improvement. Lacenski noted the make-up of the board should focus more on the agencies that are trying to help people. Reinert noted representation at 51% minimum is desirable in this area.*
- Council Member Marcou noted a conversation with Mayor Kabat who supports greater representation. Reinert noted two current openings.*
- Spivey noted in addition to the collaborative approach, there are imminent action needs to address current issues.*
- Burgos noted limitations of HRC on housing complaints and that there may need to be a structure change, perhaps having a separate body with powers to address housing discrimination. Burgos noted the next agenda should also include FOIA requests (Freedom of Information Requests), protocols and what data the HRC wants to ask for. McDermid noted she can provide direction.*
- A motion was made by Burgos, seconded by Spivey, to close public comment. The motion carried by voice vote.*
- A motion was made by Burgos, seconded by Lacenski, to re-open public comment. The motion carried by voice vote.*
- A motion was made by Reinert, no second, to submit the 11 questions suggested in McDermid's memo. Burgo stated the HRC should make a motion to request the legal department advice on requesting these questions under FOIA. Burgos restated direction to submit the 11 questions in a letter not a formal FOIA.*

*A motion was made by Reinert, seconded by VanRoosenbeek, to submit the 11 questions on McDermid's memo to the Housing Authority Board in a letter requesting a response in 60 days by regular mail and email on HRC letterhead via Sara Olson, planning clerk. The motion carried by voice vote.*

*Reinert inquired when the Housing Authority Board is meeting; McDermid noted October 11th at noon is their regular public meeting.*

4. [17-1002](#) Sundown Town display and possible collaboration with Arts Board listening session on art and social justice  
*Elizabeth Digby-Britten mentioned asking for more time to engage Kate to plan for the event. Burgos recommended placing this on the October agenda. Burgos noted the HRC is committed to partnering with the Arts Board.*
5. [17-1316](#) Discuss City of La Crosse Human Resources diversity efforts  
*Valerie Fenske, Director of Finance & Purchase, provided an update on various HR efforts at the City. Burgos asked for Fenske's email to receive updates between meetings.*
6. [17-1164](#) Announcements/Community Events  
*Spivey noted an event on October 14th from 10-12 at English Lutheran Church featuring an American Black Holocaust Museum speaker on racial disparities in la Crosse. Dr. Frank Kaplan may be speaking that Sunday on Jewish Community also.*
7. [17-1111](#) HRC Member Vacancy  
*Digby-Britten noted a Council spot needs to be filled and that they will vote at the next meeting. Also, James Parker's spot needs to be filled. The Mayor will consider applicants. Burgos will follow-up with the Mayor.*
8. [17-1317](#) Public Forum  
*Council Member Marcou noted writing an ordinance that decreased council representation on committees due to the reduction from 17 to 13 council members, noting HRC supports reinstating Council membership. This will be heard at the next J&A meeting.*

### **Next Meeting Date/Agenda Items**

*The next meeting is October 18, 2017 at 5:15 p.m.*

### **Adjournment**

*A motion was made by Digby-Britten, seconded by Spivey, to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried by voice vote. The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 p.m.*

*Notice is further given that members of other governmental bodies may be present at the above scheduled meeting to gather information about a subject over which they have decision-making responsibility.*

*NOTICE TO PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY*

*Requests from persons with a disability who need assistance to participate in this meeting should call the City Clerk's office at (608) 789-7510 or send an email to [ADAcityclerk@cityoflacrosse.org](mailto:ADAcityclerk@cityoflacrosse.org), with as much advance notice as possible.*