



**2017 ANNUAL REPORT**

**CITY OF COLUMBIA  
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**

February 6, 2018

Current Members

Term Expiration

Zach Rubin, <i>Chair &amp; former Vice Chair</i>	March 1, 2019
Andrea Waner, <i>Vice Chair &amp; former Secretary</i>	March 1, 2020
Amanda Hinnant, <i>Secretary</i>	March 1, 2020
Stacye Smith, <i>appointee to the Citizens Police Review Board</i>	March 1, 2018
Scott Dean, <i>former Chair &amp; appointee to the Citizens Police Review Board</i>	March 1, 2019
Carley Gomez	March 1, 2020
Brian Jones	March 1, 2018

Members who recently resigned or had their term expire during 2017:

Dalton Calcote	Term expired March 1, 2017
Chad McLaurin	Term expired March 1, 2017
Persephone Dakopolos	Resigned March 7, 2017

Staff Liaison for Human Rights and LGBTQ Issues:

Rose Wibbenmeyer, Assistant City Counselor

## **History of the Formation of the Columbia Human Rights Commission**

The City of Columbia has been a leader in the protection of human rights. The City of Columbia established the Commission on Human Rights and Community Relations in 1961. Later, renamed the Commission on Human Rights, the Commission's roles and responsibilities evolved over time. In 1974, the City Council amended the ordinances to give the Commission powers to conduct administrative hearings and redress violations by ordering appropriate relief (including cease and desist orders, reinstating employment or granting back pay). The Commission's role further changed as a result of a Missouri Supreme Court decision in Yellow Freight Systems, Inc. v. Mayor's Commission on Human Rights of the City of Springfield, 791 S.W.2d 382 (1990). The Yellow Freight decision made it clear that the Commission was operating beyond its constitutional limits. Following the Missouri Supreme Court's decision, the City Council 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.

In 1992, the City Council amended Chapter 12 of the Code to provide protection from discrimination based upon sexual orientation. Chapter 12 was also amended in 2009 to establish a domestic partnership registry. Also, in 2009, the City Council established the Citizens Police Review Board. In the establishing ordinance, the Human Rights Commission was given the authority to appoint one of its members to serve on the Citizens Police Review Board. In 2010, the Council established the human rights enhancement grant program and gave the Commission the authority to receive and make funding recommendations on human rights enhancement programs sponsored by community organizations. The City Council, at the request of the Commission, also added protections from discrimination based upon gender identity in 2011. The Council took action in 2012 to allow service animals in places of public accommodation. In December of 2014, the City of Columbia adopted a "Ban the Box" ordinance. Ordinance number 22286 prohibited, 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. This ordinance also expanded the duties of the Commission to include the investigation of violations of the Ban the Box ordinance.

The City ordinances provide the framework by which the Commission strives to do its work in support of human rights in a manner that is in alignment with the City's Strategic Priorities. While additional duties have been added and the ordinances have changed over time, the focus of the Commission in the promotion of human rights in Columbia is fundamental to their mission and their duties as set forth in Chapter 12 of the City of Columbia's Code of Ordinances.

## **Current Membership and Duties**

The membership of the Commission consists of seven residents, appointed by the City Council, with a demonstrated commitment to human rights and a belief in equal

opportunity. Currently, the commission consists of Scott Dean, Carley Gomez, Amanda Hinnant, Brian Jones, Zach Rubin, Stacey Smith, and Andrea Waner.

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. The Commission is dedicated to minimizing or eliminating discriminatory practices made unlawful by Chapter 12. The Commission receives discrimination complaints from the public for investigation, mediation or referral to a state or federal agency. It also participates in outreach and educational activities and makes recommendations on funding of human rights enhancement programs to raise awareness and improve human relations in the community. This report summarizes the work of the Commission in 2017 and the Commission's goals for 2018.

## **COMPLAINTS AND INQUIRIES**

The Commission is responsible for receiving and investigating complaints alleging discrimination made unlawful by Chapter 12 of the City of Columbia's Code of Ordinances. The Commission is charged with attempting to eliminate unlawful discriminatory practices.

### *Complaints*

In 2017, the Human Rights Commission received three (3) complaints alleging violations of Chapter 12 of the City Code of Ordinances.

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| HRC 2017-0001 | This complaint involved a ban the box violation. Because the business changed its application to become compliant with the City ordinances, the Commission unanimously voted to administratively close the complaint. |
| HRC 2017-0002 | This complaint alleged discrimination based upon disability in a place of public accommodation. The Commission unanimously found probable cause and referred the case to the City Prosecutor.                         |
| HRC 2017-0003 | This complaint alleged discrimination based on race. Due to a jurisdictional issue, the complaint was sent to the Missouri Commission on Human Rights.  |

### *Inquiries*

An inquiry occurs 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 2017, staff received and responded to twenty-eight (28) inquiries.

## **Educational Programming**

Section 12-18 of the City's Code requires the Commission to formulate and carry out educational programs designed to eliminate or minimize unlawful discriminatory

practices and to make recommendations for human rights enhancement program funding. In 2017, the Commission also made recommendations for funding human rights enhancement activities of four community events. Additionally, the Commission's 2017 educational programming included the Fair Housing and Lending Seminar, multiple publications, and community outreach at events.

### *Human Rights Enhancement Program*

The Commission's goal is to eliminate discriminatory practices. To achieve this goal the Commission is committed to carrying out educational programs and to cooperating with other organizations to further this purpose. Pursuant to Section 12-19 of the City Code, the Commission recommends funding for Human Rights Enhancement activities in our community to be sponsored by the City and assists in coordinating these events. In 2017, the Commission recommended funding for the following Human Rights Enhancement activities:

The Commission recommended funding in the amount of five hundred dollars for the Diversity Awareness Partnership's program Listen.Talk.Learn.: Dialogue Across Difference.

In addition, the Commission recommended grant funding to the Columbia Public Schools. A grant of five hundred dollars funded the Venerable Champa Lhunpo to speak to Hickman High School students about the human rights crisis in Tibet.

The Commission also recommended a five hundred dollar grant be given to Mid-Mo LGBT Coalition to support Mid Missouri Pride Fest.

The Human Rights Commission requested that HREP funding be used to pay for five hundred dollars of the expenses associated with the keynote speaker, Naomi Tutu, and to pay for the Diversity Awards for the Columbia Values Diversity Program for the 2017 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 2018 program. Five hundred dollars of HREP funding will be used to pay expenses associated with the costs of the awards and of the speaker Kevin Powell for the 2018 Columbia Values Diversity Celebration.

### *Fair Housing and Lending Seminar*

In partnership with the Disabilities Commission, the Commission hosted the City of Columbia's Fair Housing and Lending Seminar, which was held on April 7, 2017. The 2017 Seminar featured presentations on fair housing laws and HUD action, service animals, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the history of structural racism in housing and the need for fair housing, affordable housing in Columbia, and the Columbia Community Land Trust. Approximately 100 people attended the free event. Event

sponsors included: the Missouri Commission on Human Rights, Columbia Housing Authority, Central Bank of Boone County, and the Columbia Apartment Association.

The Commission is currently planning the 2018 Fair Housing and Lending Seminar. The 2018 seminar will include presentations by renowned experts Rigel Oliveri, Eric Krekel, Elizabeth Risch, Randy Cole and Gary Kremer. In addition, the Commission is planning on including building inclusive community training as a small group break out session during the 2018 seminar. To celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the federal Fair Housing Act, the Commission may include a display in City hall for the month of April.

### *City Source Articles and Other Publications*

The Commission worked with the City's Community Relations Department to provide human rights education through City Source articles. In addition to the nondiscrimination language included in every monthly City Source, human rights and fair housing were promoted via the City Source in January, February, March, June, October and December of 2017. Two articles discussed the Fair Housing and Lending Seminar. The October article celebrated the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Disabilities Commission and the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the addition of sexual orientation as a protected category. The December article announced the City of Columbia's score on the Human Rights Campaign's Municipal Equality Index. Recognizing these significant anniversaries and recent accomplishments illustrate the City of Columbia's long term commitment to building a community in which all persons are valued.

In addition to the City Source articles, Commissioner Zach Rubin wrote a letter to the editor that was published in the Columbia Daily Tribune on May 28, 2017. The editorial discussed the Commission's role to ensure equal rights. This editorial was prompted in part by a request from the City of Pittsburgh for a call for a collective declaration in support of human rights. The editorial can be found at: <http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/20170528/commission-determined-to-ensure-equal-rights>. There were also numerous articles and stories about the work of the Commission in the local news. In addition to the editorial, news stories and the City Source articles, the City of Columbia's efforts at obtaining a perfect score on the Municipal Equality Index were featured in the national publication of the Human Rights Campaign's Municipal Equality Index.

### *Community Outreach Activities*

The Commission also conducted outreach at various community events including Earth Day, the University of Missouri's 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Womens' Health and Wellness Fair, MU's Off Campus Housing Fair, Matters of Social Justice: Exploring Implicit Bias in Our Community event, and Shelter Insurance's Diversity Networking event. In addition, Commissioner Brian Jones provided a presentation to the Boy Scout University. Commissioner Scott Dean appeared on KOPN to promote fair housing and human rights on April 3, 2017. Through our partnership with the Columbia Housing Authority, the Commission also provided fair housing educational programs to the residents of Oak Towers on August 14, 2017, and to the residents of Paquin Towers on August 28, 2017.

*Coordination and Work with Other Community Organizations  
in Support of Human Rights and the City's Strategic Plan*

Section 12-18 of the City's Code also requires the Commission to cooperate with other organizations, public and private, to discourage discrimination. The Commission includes regular reports of the work of the Youth Advisory Council, the Disabilities Commission, the Columbia Values Diversity Committee, and the Citizens Police Review Board during its regular meetings. The Commission also has been actively following community issues such as the Vision Zero Project, inclusive bathrooms, community policing, and texting while driving. In addition, during 2017, the Commission cooperated with community organizations, including Boone County Family Resources Friends, Live Well Boone County Community Health Partnership, Refugee and Immigration Services, Diversity Awareness Partnership, Sharp End Committee, Columbia Public Schools, Cradle to Career Alliance, Boone County, Shelter Insurance, Central Bank of Boone County, Columbia Board of Realtors, Columbia Apartment Association, Daniel Boone Regional Library, Worley Street Roundtable, Parentlink, Boys and Girls Club of the Columbia Area, Missouri Commission on Human Rights, Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Columbia Housing Authority, and the University of Missouri.

These community partnerships are essential to the Commission's charge as these community contacts and partnerships assist the Commission in promoting human rights and fair housing. These efforts also support the City's strategic priority of social equity by providing human rights education, thereby strengthening neighborhoods and giving all families the opportunity to thrive. In alignment with the City's Strategic Priorities, the Commission hosted the Fair Housing and Lending Seminar, provided support to the Sharp End Committee on the African American Heritage Trail Project, lead a table discussion at the Matters of Social Justice: Exploring Implicit Bias in Our Community event, assisted in the Midwest Regional Community Land Trust Convening, helped with the Columbia Values Diversity Celebration, and was involved in the development and expansion of the Community Scholars Program which was featured in a City Channel production. The video production can be found at:

<https://www.como.gov/citychannel/2017/07/19/2017-community-scholars-program-2/>.

*Upcoming Events*

Commissioners Brian Jones and Stacey Smith are serving on the Columbia Values Diversity Celebration Committee and are actively involved in the 2018 event. Chair Zach Rubin is scheduled to be on KOPN to promote human rights and fair housing on April 2, 2018. The Commission will be hosting the 2018 Fair Housing and Lending Seminar on Friday, April 6, 2018 in City Hall.



## **Additional 2017 Activities and Accomplishments**

### *Reports to Council*

The Commission is also charged with advising the City Council on human rights issues. In 2017, the Commission provided reports and recommendations to the City Council on a welcoming proclamation, expanding protections from discrimination, and on joining the Welcoming Cities organization.

### *Equity and Inclusion Work*

In alignment with the City of Columbia's Strategic Plan, the Commission embarked on a comprehensive review of the City of Columbia's Code of Ordinances for equity and inclusion. Thus far, the Commission has reviewed Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 16 (in progress), 24, and 26. Upon completion of the Commission's project, the Commission intends to send a report to Council with the Commission's conclusions and recommendations for making the City's Code of Ordinances more inclusive and equitable. The Commission is also researching inclusive event planning. The Commission hopes that gathering and sharing event planning resources will result in more inclusive City and community events.

### *Human Rights Campaign Municipal Equality Index*

Each year, the Human Rights Campaign, the largest lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer civil rights organization in the United States, examines and rates cities on established criteria to establish a municipal equality index (MEI). The Commission has worked on improving the City of Columbia's score over the last few years. Columbia was first rated in 2013 and obtained a score of 74. In 2014 and 2015, the City's MEI was also in the seventies. In 2016, the City was able to obtain a rating increase to 92. During this year, the Commission worked with the Human Rights Campaign to achieve a perfect score on the Municipal Equality Index, the City of Columbia's highest score to date. In addition to obtaining a perfect score on the Municipal Equality Index, the City of Columbia's efforts were highlighted in the full report with an article featuring Mayor Treece. The Human Rights Campaign's Municipal Equality Index full report can be found at: <https://www.hrc.org/mei>.

### **Goals for 2018**

The Commission, in alignment with the City of Columbia's strategic plan, has established the following goals for 2018. The Commission will continue its review of the City of Columbia Code of Ordinances and will provide a report to the City Council with its recommendations for improving social equity and inclusion in the City's Code. The Commission also intends to continue to explore inclusive event planning resources and look at ways to provide resources to the city and the community to make events more inclusive. In addition, the Commission will continue its review of the Human Rights Campaign's Municipal Equality Index criteria for 2018 and the 2017 scoring for additional areas of improvement that could be implemented to make our community

more inclusive. The Commission will also continue its work to promote fair housing and human rights and will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the federal Fair Housing Act.

### **Conclusion**

The Commission looks forward to a productive 2018, 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 and fair housing issues. We invite you to attend any of our meetings. Thank you for your previous support as well as your assistance into the future.