



Governor Kim Reynolds
Lt. Governor Adam Gregg
San Wong, Director

**Iowa Department of Human Rights
Minutes of Board Meeting
February 25, 2021 3:00-4:30 via Zoom**

Members present

- Floyd Winter, Chair, Public Member
- LaSheila Yates, Public Member
- Dr. Ahmadu Baba-Singhri, Commission on the Status of African Americans
- Anna Brown, Commission on Community Action Agencies
- Elizabeth Coonan, Commission on the Status of Women
- Ben Jung, Iowa Commission of Asian/Pacific Islander Affairs
- Caleb Knutson, Commission of Latino Affairs
- Karen Mackey, Commission of Native American Affairs
- Telina McKenna Quintana, Commission of Deaf Services
- Judge Jeffrey Neary, Justice Advisory Board
- Michelle Ray-Michalec, Commission of Persons with Disabilities
- San Wong, Director, Iowa Department of Human Rights
- Senator Sarah Trone Garriot, Iowa Senate

Members Absent

Senator Dennis Guth, Iowa Senate

DHR Staff Present

- Bill Brand, Administrator, Division of Community Action Agencies
- Jim Mezera, Fiscal Officer
- Steve Michael, Administrator, Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning
- Monica Stone, Deputy Director and Administrator, Division of Community Advocacy and Services
- Sonya Streit, Executive Officer 2

Guests Present

- Jeff Reese, American Sign Language Interpreter
- Laura Lord, American Sign Language Interpreter
- Jean Logan, Executive Director, Community Action Agency of Siouxland

1. Call to Order and Introductions

Chair Winter called the meeting to order. A quorum was present. Introductions were made.

2. Approval of Minutes

Mackey moved to approve the December 2, 2020, meeting; seconded by Judge Neary. Motion carried by voice vote.

3. Board Updates

a. Commission of Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs

Ben Jung:

- The DHR/Office of Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs will be hiring an Executive Officer to replace Tina Shaw.
- The Commission will meet in March.
- Effective December 27, 2020, the federal Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, was passed and restored Medicaid to eligible Compacts of Free Association (COFA) migrants. Commissioner Jung thanked everyone for their advocacy work.

b. Commission of Native American Affairs

Karen Mackey:

- Commission continues to provide education to end the use of Native Americans as mascots. The next Commission meeting will be on April 12, 2021.
- Judge Neary commended Commissioner Karen Mackey and the Sioux City Human Rights Commission for sponsoring a 21-day racial equity challenge.

c. Justice Advisory Board

Judge Neary:

- The Justice Advisory Board met the morning of February 25, 2021. Two youth members of the Youth Action Squad gave a presentation of their advocacy work to remove school resource officers from the school district because it disparately affected students of color. The youth advocated for other ways to resolve conflict that doesn't involve law enforcement. The Justice Advisory Board will meet again in May.

d. Commission of Deaf Services

McKenna-Quintana:

- The Commission is working on hearing aid health insurance coverage for the deaf community. When health insurance plans do not pay for hearing aids, people pay for them out of pocket, which can be costly for seniors who have hearing loss. A hearing aid can cost \$800-\$1,200 per ear.
- The Commission is also advocating for children who are deaf and hard of hearing in the area of education. They will also assess how the Commission can improve its services. The Commission will talk with ASK Resource Center to see what services they provide, particularly services to children who are born deaf. The next Commission meeting will be in March.

e. Commission on the Status of African Americans

Dr. Baba-Singhri:

- February is Black History Month. Dr. Baba-Singhri offered a historical perspective on black history. There are disparities in the areas of the economy, education, criminal justice, health, and more. Institutional racism and hiring practices at state, city, county levels should be reviewed. Look for opportunities for black people.
- The Commission met on February 24, 2021. The Commission plans to meet with the governor in the near future.

f. Commission on the Status of Women

Beth Coonan:

- Commission met on January 25, 2021. DHR staff member Kimberly Baxter gave a presentation on domestic violence in Iowa.
- DHR staff member Kim Cheeks was hired as an Executive Officer 1 for the Office on the Status of Women, in addition to her current role in the Office on the Status of African Americans.
- Commission is soliciting nominations for the 2021 Iowa Women's Hall of Fame. The program has yet to be determined.
- Working on setting up a roundtable with Senators Grassley and Ernst regarding the Equal Rights Amendment.
- Applied for historical trail marker for Amelia Jenks Bloomer and will know in a couple of months on the decision.
- SHE-cession—The Commission is gathering statistics and effects of the pandemic on women in the workforce.

g. Commission of Persons with Disabilities

Michelle Ray Michalec:

- The Commission was scheduled to meet on February 25, 2021, but there was no quorum.
- Commission is working with Project Lifesaver, a program that works with local public safety agencies to locate individuals who tend to wander and become lost like the elderly and persons on autism spectrum.
- Commissioners working on issues regarding mental health; FMLA and assistive technology; COVID accommodations in workplace (employers, families, individuals); homeschooling; and remote learning.

h. Commission of Latino Affairs

Caleb Knutson:

- The Commission is working on a public service announcement and webinar in Spanish and working with doctors encourage people to get vaccinated.
- Continuous projects include Latinos You Should Know and Iowa Spanish Help Line.

4. Department Report

a. Director Wong:

- Today, (February 25, 2021) is Virtual DHR Day on the Hill. In lieu of gathering in person, DHR created a video highlighting its work and its COVID-19 response. Some DHR boards and commissions are meeting this week.

b. Division of Community Action Agencies

Bill Brand:

- DCAA received \$4.2 million from the CARES Act for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) to help Iowans with winter home heating costs. The program also assists with crisis—when a household is at risk of being disconnected.
- DCAA also received \$10 million in Community Services Block Grant. The funds will be distributed to 16 local community action agencies that serve all 99 counties. Funds may be used for food assistance, food pantry, food distribution, rent, mortgage, deposits into apartments, personal hygiene, and childcare.

- A water utility initiative from federal government is expected to come to DHR to administer.
- \$25 billion was allotted for rent and utility assistance nationwide. Iowa will receive \$180 million. Funds will be administered through Iowa Finance Authority, Iowa Economic Development Authority. Major partners are local community action agencies who will determine eligibility and make payments.

c. Division of Community Advocacy and Services

Monica Stone:

- Governor Kim Reynolds recently announced the new state website for vaccines language translations.
- The Department of Education, Department of Human Services, and Department of Human Rights will collaborate and institute “no wrong door” initiative. This initiative will build connections between agencies.

d. Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning

Steve Michael:

- Two young people presented at Justice Advisory Board. Members of the Youth Action Squad will present their plans on the topics of racial justice and COVID-19.
- Reviewed legislative bills of interest.

e. New DHR Board Member:

- Senator Sarah Trone Garriott introduced herself as a new member of the DHR Board. She represents the west side of the Des Moines metro. She is a Lutheran Pastor. She works with the Des Moines Area Religious Council (DMARC) that works with the food pantry.
- She is educating the public on how they can interact with the legislature. She encouraged the Board to contact her and subscribe to her newsletter. Email: Sarah.trone.garriott@legis.iowa.gov; phone: (515) 661-9679. Newsletter: <https://mailchi.mp/legis/trone-garriott>

There was no public comment.

Mackey moved to adjourn, seconded by Judge Neary, motion passed. Meeting adjourned.