

**CITY OF LINCOLN, NEBRASKA
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
MINUTES**

Thursday, April 25, 2024
555 S 10th Street, 1st Floor
City County Building, Council Chambers

CALL TO ORDER:

The April 25, 2024 meeting of the Lincoln Commission on Human Rights (LCHR) was called to order at 4:04 p.m. by Emira Ibrahimasic, Chair.

ROLL CALL:

The roll was called.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Commissioners: Emira Ibrahimasic (Chair), Alyssa Martin (Vice Chair), Kewan Asaad, Sheri Blok, Sarah Cohen Walker, John Goldrich, Ryan Kelly and Rob McEntarffer (arrived at 4:11 p.m.).

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Commissioners: Catherine Wilson.

STAFF PRESENT:

Jamie Reyes, Rob Rowan, Chassidy Jackson-Goodwin, Abby Littrell, Francisca Beltran, Thuyhong Le and Shanna Eckman.

APPROVAL OF March 28, 2024 MINUTES:

A motion was made by Cohen Walker and seconded by Goldrich to approve the minutes of the DATE, 2024 meeting. Hearing no discussion, Ibrahimasic asked for the roll call. Voting "aye" were Ibrahimasic, Martin, Asaad, Blok, Cohen Walker, Goldrich, Kelly and McEntarffer. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF April 25, 2024 AGENDA:

A motion was made by Blok and seconded by Asaad to approve the agenda. Hearing no discussion, Ibrahimasic asked for the roll call. Voting "aye" were Ibrahimasic, Martin, Asaad, Blok, Cohen Walker, Goldrich, Kelly and McEntarffer. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS:

Public Hearing Update: No update at this time.

Bylaws: No update at this time.

NEW BUSINESS:

Outreach: Conference is next week, things are being finalized.

Star City Pride is June 7th and 8th, LCHR will be present.

International Women's Art Exhibition: May 8th at 5:00 p.m. is the reception for the art on the 3rd floor.

AAPI Festival hosted by the Asian Center is May 19th at the Sandhills Global Events Center.

Juneteenth Event will be on June 15th at Woods Park.

Director Report: Fair Housing month is coming to a close. LCHR had a booth at the NIFA conference, Rob Rowan had a presentation about assistance animals. On May 21st, HUD will be doing a site visit. On June 5th -7th, Jamie and Francisca will be attending the Cambio de Colores Conference in Kansas City.

CASE DISPOSITIONS:

LCHR No.: 23-0123-004-H

A motion was made by Blok and seconded by Martin to recommend a finding of **no reasonable cause** on all allegations.

Cohen Walker asked if the appliances being replaced by the Complainant was under the previous ownership or new ownership; Investigator Jackson Goodwin said it was under the previous ownership but that no evidence was supplied by Complainant supporting the claim. Cohen Walker asked what the old rent was compared to the new rent; Ibrahimasic pointed out that it was \$695 if a year lease was signed or \$795 if it was month to month. Cohen Walker questioned why the total amount due was so high, Investigator Jackson Goodwin explained that it was for more than one month and also had late fees associated with it.

Asaad questioned if everyone's rent increased at the same time, if it was the same amount and if the Respondent had changed their contact information; Investigator Jackson Goodwin explained that all of the other tenants had moved out at the time that they sent a letter explaining the new rent amount and contact information for the new ownership. Asaad also asked if the Complainant provided any evidence that they had made maintenance requests to the Respondent, Investigator Jackson Goodwin said no evidence was provided.

Ibrahimasic asked if the rent was raised before or after the renovations; Investigator Jackson Goodwin was unsure.

Hearing no further discussion, Ibrahimasic asked for the roll call. Voting "aye" were Ibrahimasic, Martin, Asaad, Blok, Cohen Walker, Goldrich, Kelly and McEntarffer. Motion carried.

LCHR No.: 23-0412-007-H

A motion was made by Cohen Walker and seconded by Goldrich to recommend a finding of **no reasonable cause** on all allegations.

Martin asked if the three bedroom unit that the Complainant was finally moved into on the lower level; Investigator Jackson Goodwin confirmed yes. McEntarffer asked if the other tenants who were moved in to other units before Complainant also had accommodations needed. Investigator Jackson Goodwin explained that the other tenants didn't have a section 8 voucher from LHA, and that LHA would not approve those units for rental with a section 8 voucher because the building was under construction and they considered it to be a safety issue, and that it was LHA who made that determination not the Respondent. Respondent had offered for Complainant to end her lease without any repercussions since they were unable to accommodate them immediately.

Hearing no further discussion, Ibrahimasic asked for the roll call. Voting "aye" were Ibrahimasic, Martin, Asaad, Blok, Cohen Walker, Goldrich, Kelly and McEntarffer. Motion carried.

LCHR No.: 23-0609-009-H

A motion was made by McEntarffer and seconded by Blok to recommend a finding of **no reasonable cause** on all allegations.

Martin asked if Respondent collected the money for repairs; Investigator Rowan said no that Respondent hadn't collected the money, nor had they tried to and that they had sold all of their rental properties and are no longer landlords.

Cohen Walker questioned how big the property was, to see if the charges were reasonable or not. Ibrahimasic noted that even though Respondent wasn't attempting to collect the remaining balance, they had already kept the Complainant's deposit and that amount seemed unreasonable. McEntarffer asked if Respondent regularly repainted all units after a tenant moved out or if it was just this one unit in particular. Investigator Rowan stated that yes they did repaint all units after a tenant moved out. Cohen Walker asked if this was a typical amount charged for Respondent, Investigator Rowan noted that Respondent said yes this was a typical amount especially when an animal was involved, but that Respondent had destroyed all of their records after selling all of their units and did not have any evidence to support their claim.

Kelly asked about the timeline of when the Respondent gave the Complainant the bill, in regards to the retaliation claim. Investigator Rowan explained that it was all happening at the same time; the Complainant's previous complaint had been ruled as reasonable cause and that it was in the public hearing phase, but before the final determination had been made, that the Respondent gave the bill to the Complainant. Blok asked when the Respondent sold their properties; Investigator Rowan said the Respondent gave Complainant the bill in December 2022 and sold their properties in December 2023.

Hearing no further discussion, Ibrahimasic asked for the roll call. Voting "aye" were Martin, Asaad, Blok, and McEntarffer. Voting "no" were Ibrahimasic, Cohen Walker, Goldrich and Kelly. Motion failed.

A motion was made by Martin and seconded by McEntarffer to table the case to a later date. Voting "aye" were Ibrahimasic, Martin, Asaad, Blok, Cohen Walker, Goldrich, Kelly and McEntarffer. Motion carried.

LCHR No.: 23-0622-010-H

A motion was made by McEntarffer and seconded by Ibrahimasic to recommend a finding of **no reasonable cause** on all allegations.

Cohen Walker asked if the Respondent's method of obtaining rent was the same for all tenants; Investigator Rowan affirmed. Cohen Walker asked if there was any evidence from either side for their claim that rent was paid or not paid. Investigator Rowan said the only evidence he was able to obtain was the court document that said the rent was not paid, though neither Respondent or Complainant had any ledger or receipt to support any of this. Attorney Littrell reviewed the court document and stated that there was a legal finding by the Judge that the Complainant had not paid rent and was to vacate the unit by a certain date or they would be evicted.

Ibrahimasic expressed concern that the Respondent's claim of immediately addressing a pest issue was ten days after the fact. Martin asked if the negative comment would be enough evidence of discrimination, Attorney Littrell confirmed that it could be but there wasn't any corroborating evidence for it. Kelly noted that in this type of situation, the Respondent seemed less credible because of their business practices, however they did respond to the request for exterminators and sent them twice so it is difficult to make the connection between the supposed negative comment and the resulting actions. Goodrich noted that while the negative comment was offensive it is very difficult to go in the direction of finding cause when there wasn't any evidence regarding it.

Hearing no further discussion, Ibrahimasic asked for the roll call. Voting "aye" were Ibrahimasic, Martin, Asaad, Blok, Cohen Walker, Goldrich, Kelly and McEntarffer. Motion carried.

Administrative Closure

LCHR No.: 21-0413-002-PA

A motion was made by Blok and seconded by Kelly to recommend approval of the administrative closure.

Ibrahimasic asked if we knew what settlement they reached, Director Reyes informed them that we didn't have any information on it.

Hearing no further discussion, Ibrahimasic asked for the roll call. Voting "aye" were Ibrahimasic, Martin, Blok, Cohen Walker, Kelly and McEntarffer. Asaad and Goldrich abstained. Motion carried.

LCHR No.: 21-0430-003-PA

A motion was made by McEntarffer and seconded by Goldrich to recommend approval of the administrative closure.

Hearing no discussion, Ibrahimasic asked for the roll call. Voting "aye" were Ibrahimasic, Martin, Asaad, Blok, Cohen Walker, Goldrich, Kelly and McEntarffer. Motion carried.

LCHR No.: 21-0503-004-PA

A motion was made by Martin and seconded by Asaad to recommend approval of the administrative closure.

Hearing no discussion, Ibrahimasic asked for the roll call. Voting "aye" were Ibrahimasic, Martin, Asaad, Blok, Cohen Walker, Goldrich, Kelly and McEntarffer. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

There was no public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:14 p.m.

Next Meeting:

Thursday, May 30, 2024, at 4:00 p.m.
555 S. 10th Street, 1st Floor, Council Chambers