

Fair Housing Task Force

Minutes of the May 13, 2021 Meeting

Present:

Legislator Sam Gonzalez, representing the 9th District.
Legislator Steven Flotteron, representing the 11th District.
Derek Stein (Office of the Presiding Officer)
Natasha Marrero (Office of Legislator Gonzalez)
Dawn Lott (SC Human Rights Commission)
Sharon Mullon (LIHP)
Ashely Alvarado (Long Island Hispanic Bar Association)
Hon. Frank Schellace (Long Island Hispanic Bar Association)
Liza Milgrim (Long Island Hispanic Bar Association)
Dr. Georgette Grier-Key (NAACP)
Pilar Moya-Mancera (Latino Justice)
Ian Wilder (Long Island Housing Services)
Bo Patten (LIBOR)
Froebel Chungata (NYS Division of Human Rights)
V. Elaine Gross (Erase Racism)
Johnathan Smith (NYS Division of Human Rights)

Absent:

Nancy Vargas-Johnson (Central Islip Civic Council)
Lynda Perdomo-Ayala (SC Human Rights Commission)
Cicely Harris (NYS Division of Human Rights)
Mitchell H. Pally (Long Island Builders Institute)

Guest:

Dr. Dionne Walker- Belgrave

The meeting was called to order at 1:06 p.m.

1. April 28, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Legislator Gonzalez made a motion to approve the April 28, 2021 meeting Minutes, Sharon Mullon and Dawn Lott seconded the motion, these meeting minutes were then approved unanimously. Hon. Frank Schellace offered to make one edit to correct language in the meeting Minutes to confirm that he dropped his objection to the scope of the Task Force being limited.

2. Review revised draft Final Report and Recommendations

Derek Stein began to tell the task force the corrections he made, going through the report and listing changes, including

Hon. Frank stated that the state should be called out. Legislator Gonzalez stated that unfortunately, that is what we are doing. Stop waiting for other people, other organizations and other government to take the necessary actions for after his individuals in his community repeatedly being screwed over. The state is supposed to be doing their job; if they do not do their job then we as a Task Force and as the County would need to act. Legislator Gonzalez noted that

the Task Force has a responsibility to not pass the buck to the State. Dr. Grier-Key stated that it's not just the State, saying there are plenty of lawyers who practice real estate. Ian Wilder agreed Hon. Frank Schellace regarding the possible AFFH regulation, a similar action could be taken by the County. He seconded Pilar Moya-Mancera's motion to add Limited English Proficiency (LEP) to the protected classes of the human rights law and suggested that should be added to the first paragraph of the human rights law. He noted that Hon. Frank Schellace was mistaken in assuming the State is the lead agency, as there are three layers of government, the County regulates human rights and can regulate human right licensees if they violate the County's Human Rights Law. The Long Island Divided report called out both counties. Ian suggested that when the report is sent in the first section falls within the conservative reading of the legislation and instead we should put two meta-headings for resolutions along with a heading for other actions taken by the Task Force. He noted that having laws without funding is a joke. He also noted there is no guarantee the Legislature will vote on any specific resolution, language should be put on to make sure what's in the enabling legislation and what's not. He noted that the public will not see the difference, but it should legally solve any problems.

Dawn Lott noted there is no reason to restate what's already been stated, and asked if that was a motion under Robert's Rules and that if it was she would second it. Ian Wilder asked for clarification, if the motion would be to just signify that there are two different sections of the report. Dawn Lott said that is correct. Derek Stein added for the record he suggested a similar idea to Legislator Flotteron after receiving his suggestions the day prior. Dr. Georgette Grier-Key agreed with motion. Ian Wilder explained that the first section of the report, entitled "Increased County Support for the Human Rights Commission" be labeled separately as falling within the purview of the Task Force's recommendations. The other part of the motion was to label the rest of the report beginning with "Real Estate Licensing" as other areas related to fair housing that were raised during the Task Force. He stated the important thing for him is to get the motion out. The motion was made by Ian Wilder, seconded by Dawn Lott and was approved unanimously.

Elaine Gross voted for the motion, and thought it unfortunate that the English that says that the Task Force is looking at improvement for Fair Housing enforcement should be splitting hairs in this way, since fair housing enforcement is a complex and multi-faceted issue. She felt it comes close to just being obstructionist as a citizen active in the community looking to provide services finds this kind of process disappointing she agreed with Ian Wilder and asked the members to not forget why they are here. Legislator Flotteron agreed with Elaine Gross, saying that words matter and we should have amended the legislation months ago, the rest of the ideas are simply things that we should mark separately. Lynda Perdomo-Ayala stated that while she understood, she felt it would be unimportant to amend the resolution now. Legislator Flotteron stated the first section and it may instead be a new resolution and there would be follow-up on some of the ideas and legislation that would emerge from this. Lynda Perdomo-Ayala asked why there was a focus on making that change at this time and said that process is like lead, things just don't move and stated her preference is to have things move forward. Dr. Grier-Key stated that it felt like we are repeating topics from each meeting, she noted there was a discussion to make a recommendation for a future Task Force but this discussion has held up the Task Force. She stated it has been prohibitive and disappointing. Sharon Mullon agreed with a lot of what's been said, there is a way to include them and to prepare a synopsis of the Minutes and Public Hearings which would relate to the Task Force's charge, it doesn't need to be the full Minutes but can just be summaries of what's been said during the Public Hearing and other meetings.

Hon. Frank Schellace disagreed with the idea that the Task Force has been wasting their time discussing these topics over and over, noting that this was the second time the Task Force has been able to review the final report, he stated they have been talking about procedure and format in order to ensure that action will happen. He asked if there would be another meeting to go over changes. Legislator Gonzalez noted they had to prepare a meeting to go over everything with each member of the Task Force prior to presenting the report to the Legislature and before the presentation to the Government Operations Committee meeting. Even if the meeting is just a final vote and nothing more. Legislator Gonzalez asked Derek Stein to circulate any changes in advance. Derek Stein proposed a schedule wherein the fourth draft would be circulated on Friday, May 14th with changes due by Wednesday, May 19th, the revised final draft would be sent out a day or two later, with the last Task Force meeting scheduled during the week of May 24th a week at least a week before the scheduled presentation of the Task Force during the June 2nd Government Operations, Personnel, Information Technology, and Diversity Committee.

Legislator Gonzalez asked Hon. Frank Schellace to explain his recommendations, Hon. Frank Schellace suggested that instead anyone who has any recommendations should just submit them in writing and let the Task Force go over the suggestions on their own and vote on them during the meeting to take a vote. Pilar Moya-Mancera then went over her proposal, which noted the percent of Suffolk County residents who have Limited English Proficiency and are foreign born has gone up despite a decrease in Suffolk County's overall population. She suggested its time for them to be recognized based on this data, and suggested Limited English Proficiency be added to the list of protected classes under Suffolk County Human Rights Law. She noted this would cast a wide net and would cover not only Spanish speakers but speakers of Haitian Creole, Chinese or any number of other languages. Lynda Perdomo-Ayala noted Suffolk County has the largest population of Latino immigrants outside of New York City. Dawn Lott asked if LEP was included as a protected category in the vote they took earlier and asked why there would be any other additional changes and asked for a motion to go through past minutes to confirm Pilar Moya-Mancera's recommendation is included and to confirm if there has been a deadline. Dr. Grier-Key seconded that and said the deadline was in chat earlier, and said that the 5 pages of changes would be ridiculous. Derek Stein stated his understanding of the vote and motion earlier was just to have two meta-headers, he didn't think there was a separate vote regarding Limited English Proficiency. Dawn Lott asked Derek Stein to go through the minutes and see if there was a deadline. Frank Schellace asked Dr. Grier-Key if she was making a motion to exclude his letter. Dr. Grier-Key replied she was, since there had been a prior deadline for any changes. Derek Stein noted that the initial deadline for full recommendations was in March but he understood Hon. Frank Schellace's letter to predominantly be amendments rather than new recommendations. Legislator Gonzalez stated he would review the minutes to make sure everything is set. Dr. Grier-Key stated that's why she asked about the 5-page recommendation. Hon. Frank Schellace suggested there was no significant recommendations in his recommendations and that there were no recommendations in the report.

Legislator Gonzalez stated they will have to go through the report and through the 5 pages he sent in. Hon. Frank Schellace reiterated he received the draft only yesterday. Legislator Gonzalez asked for more time to be provided for individuals to review the draft. Derek Stein reiterated that all changes made for the fourth draft would have to be in a week later on Thursday May 20th and then the Task Force would meet again about a week after that. Initially the Task Force scheduled its next meeting for Wednesday, May 26th, but that was rescheduled to Thursday, May 27th at 1:00 p.m. Derek Stein noted the Government Operations, Personnel, Information Technology and Diversity Committee is meeting at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, June 2nd.

Ashley Alvarado asked for more information on the specific nature of the Language English Proficiency amendment, if the Language English Proficiency requirement would have any form of testing involved as well. Pilar Moya-Mancera mentioned her recommendation came from seeing individuals turned away from housing because they do not speak English, and comes from her work as a housing counselor. She noted her agency does not do testing. Legislator Gonzalez noted that in her community some kind of testing with different languages would be helpful, as there are a number of realtors who specifically target or market to Latinos.

3. **Next Meeting:** Thursday, May 27th at 1:00 p.m.

Meeting was adjourned at 2:33 p.m. Meeting Minutes prepared by Natasha Marrero & Derek Stein.

CC: NM, JH, DS