

Jackson County, Missouri

Commissioners
Howard Lotven, Chairman
Roger Davis
Mary Shannon
Keith Curnutt
Jacquelyn Eidson



Jackson County Courthouse
415 E. 12th Street
Kansas City, Missouri 64106
(816)881-3670

Ethics, Human Relations, and Citizen Complaints Commission

<p>Meeting Minutes Thursday, April 18th, 2024, at 5:15p.m. Fourth Regular Meeting</p>

1. Call to Order

Howard Lotven, Chairman, called the fourth regular meeting of the Ethics, Human Relations, and Citizen Complaints Commission to order.

2. Roll Call

Present 5 – Howard Lotven, Mary Shannon, Jacquelyn Eidson, Roger Davis, Keith Curnutt

Absent NONE

Excused NONE

A motion was requested by Howard Lotven, seconded by Keith Curnutt to excuse Jacquelyn Eidson from the March 2024 commission meeting. The motion passed with a voice vote.

A motion was made by Jacquelyn Eidson, seconded by Mary Shannon to excuse Roger Davis from the March 2024 commission meeting. The motion passed with a voice vote.

3. Introduction of OEHRCC Staff and Guests

Present – Director Chris Crawford, Administrative Assistant Alexandria Gold-Barnes

4. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Roger Davis, seconded by Jacquelyn Eidson to approve the February 2024 regular meeting minutes. The motion passed with a voice vote.

A motion was made by Mary Shannon, seconded by Jacquelyn Eidson to approve the March 2024 regular meeting minutes. The motion passed with a voice vote.

5. Director's Report

A motion was made by Mary Shannon, seconded by Keith Curnutt to approve the March 2024 director's report with case summaries. The motion passed with a voice vote.

Ransomware Attack

As you may have seen reported in the news, Jackson County was the victim of a ransomware attack. County administration has reported that this attack was perpetrated by Russian hackers and was an attempt to gain access to sensitive information within the county's systems. The administration has also reported that the hackers gained access to the county's systems and the attack began when an employee at the detention center clicked a link in an unknown e-mail. The result of the attack was that the county's system, including in-house software programs, phones, and internal and internet networks were compromised and had to be shut down to prevent the attackers from gaining further access. These systems prevented county associates from utilizing many of the resources necessary to do their jobs daily. While the IT department worked to stop the attack and restore the systems, associates throughout the county continued working, either in office locations where work could be done manually without the assistance of systems or work could be done which could be input into the systems at a later date, or remotely using personal hotspots and home networks. Although associates continued working, contacting the county became nearly impossible for many members of the public because phone and network connections were disabled. The period that the systems were down, and services were limited, lasted approximately 10 days. County administration reports that they are very satisfied with this timeline, stating that similar attacks in other counties across the country have taken multiple months to identify, address, and restore services. Although there are still some service delays and bugs in the system, all services are back up and running and available for county associates to use to assist members of the public. The administration reports that they will be taking steps to ensure the county is better protected from this type of attack in the future and more prepared in case something like this happens again. These steps may include mandated security and systems changes in departments throughout the county as well as investments in the county's emergency preparedness funds, and additional training in information security for county associates. Importantly, the county administration reports that although the attackers gained access to a large amount of information, they do not believe any personal or compromising information about county associates or citizens doing business with the county was accessed. This is partly due to the county's use of third-party vendors and cloud-based software which created a barrier between the county's internal systems and the information stored with the third parties and on the cloud. This is also partly due to the quick response of the county's IT department in cutting off access to the systems to ensure that the attackers could not gain access to any more information. These steps also helped the county to

restore the systems and reinforce security without having to pay the ransom as demanded by the attackers.

Case Numbers

Through March, the office received 84 official complaints. These numbers reflect a significant increase compared to previous years. In 2022, the office received 66 total complaints. Through March 2023, the office received 59 complaints. For all of 2023 the office received 202 complaints with an average of about 17 per month. So far for 2024, the office is averaging 28 complaints per month. While we believe a certain amount of increase to be a positive reflection of the work we are doing, we will continue to monitor the complaints for trends to determine if any particular county policies are driving the increase in complaints and issues reported by citizens.

Truman Courthouse

We have continued to receive many complaints regarding personal property business at the Truman Courthouse, including complaints of long lines, wait times, inability to see an associate, and the difficulty and time commitment required to complete even a simple task. We have reported these complaints and concerns to the administration and the assessment department on multiple occasions and have encouraged process improvement and recommended changes to members of the administration and the legislature. Some of the improvements discussed have been to reopen a second location to allow traffic at the Truman Courthouse to be reduced, to devote more resources to e-mail response to offer a more viable alternative to conducting in-person business at the Truman Courthouse, and to interact with citizens in line to determine what they need and if they can be helped. The assessment department has hired several new associates and the administration reports that they will be reopening the downtown courthouse location of the personal property tax office. The administration also reports that they have begun interacting with citizens in line to determine if they can be quickly assisted, if they are in the right place, and if they have all the documents necessary to complete their business. These measures are helping prevent people from waiting in line only to find out they don't have the necessary documents or needed to be at a different location. They are also helping people who only need something as simple as having a waiver or a receipt printed off to be able to handle that business immediately without waiting in line for several hours. This is a significant improvement.

Board of Equalization (BOE)

The BOE continues to hold meetings between hearing officers and taxpayers to try to resolve appeals. There are still several thousand 2023 appeals outstanding and appeals for the 2024 tax year begin on May 1st. There is a concern that the board may fall even more behind as 2024 appeals begin to come in. There is also a concern that those who are still waiting for their 2023 appeal may file a 2024 appeal, which may confuse the process moving forward.

Jackson County Detention Center (JCDC)

The construction of the new location for the JCDC is continuing, and the contractor reports that the project is on budget and ahead of schedule at this point. While this is good news, the current detention center is still operating well above capacity and suffering from facilities issues daily. Currently, the facility has only one working elevator for inmates. This could be a security and safety concern and the county are working to get the additional elevator operational as soon as possible.

Case Summaries

Cases #24045-24080 were reviewed. There were no questions or concerns.

A motion was made by Roger Davis, seconded by Mary Shannon, to approve the director's report with the case summaries. The motion passed by a voice vote.

6. New Business

NONE

7. Unfinished Business

NONE

8. Public Comments

NONE

9. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Roger Davis, seconded by Mary Shannon. The motion passed by a voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 6:05 pm.