



State of Illinois
JB Pritzker
Governor



Tracey B. Fleming
Director

Human Rights Authority
Legal Advocacy Service
Office of State Guardian

MINUTES

Friday, June 13, 2025, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm

Chicago: Bilandic Building, 160 N. LaSalle, 5th floor, Room N-502

Springfield: 830 S. Spring Street, ICDD Conference Room

Commissioners Present

Donald J. Dew, <i>Interim Chair</i>	Ava George Stewart, Esq.
Garvin G. Ambrose	Mariel Hamer-Sinclair
Paula A. Basta, M.Div	Dean Cassandra L. Hill
Representative William Davis	Mary Kennelly
Kathryn E. Eisenhart, Esq.	Representative Bob Morgan

Executive Staff Present

Dr. Mary L. Milano, Esq.	Director (via remote)
Teresa Parks	Deputy Director and Director, Human Rights Authority
Anthony E. Rothert, Esq.	General Counsel
Eric Bolinger	Chief Fiscal and Financial Officer
Angela Herron	Director, Human Resources
Veronique Baker, Esq.	Director, Legal Advocacy Services
Adrian Pollock	Private Secretary to the Director / Springfield
Atul Chokshi	Private Secretary to the Director / Chicago
Florence Martin	Confidential Assistant to the Director

Executive Staff Absent Barry Lowy, Esq., Director, Office of State Guardian

The meeting was called to order by interim Chair Dew. Roll was taken, and a quorum was present at 10:00 am.

ACTION ITEMS

- **Approval of March 28, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes**
 - Motion was made by Commissioner Ambrose, and 2nd by Commissioner Basta, motion passed, and the minutes were unanimously approved.
- **Approval of March 28, 2025, Special Meeting minutes**
 - Motion was made by Commissioner Hamer-Sinclair, and 2nd by Commissioner Basta, motion passed, and the minutes were unanimously approved.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

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- **Election of officers for one-year term beginning July 1, 2025**

- The Commission's nominating Committee voted to nominate Commissioner Paula A. Basta as Chair of the Commission and Commissioner Ava George Stewart as Vice-Chair. Both parties accepted the nomination. Motion was made by Commissioner Bob Morgan and 2nd by Commissioner Ambrose. Motion passed and the new officers were unanimously approved.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Dr. Mary L. Milano, Director (via remote)

Director Milano announced her retirement, effective July 1, 2025. She stated that it has been a privilege to be the Director, and she has truly loved working with the various Commissioners to the newest staff members. She expressed appreciation for the committed staff who work diligently for the and the Agency's clientele, and for the support of the Commissioners over the years.

She then introduced Tracey Fleming as the candidate identified by the Governor's office to become Director of the agency. Mr. Fleming brings years of experience as Director of the Human Rights Commission, working with the way larger communities and underserved communities interact with institutional structures that support the development and growth of persons, cares deeply about the mission of the Commission and the desire to move the Agency forward. She recommended his appointment wholeheartedly.

Chair Dew then invited Mr. Fleming to introduce himself. He began by thanking Dr. Milano for her service to the State of Illinois. He then gave an overview of his experience in working with boards, nonprofit organizations, the civic community, and outside of government, and he looks forward to getting to know in more detail the work of the Commission.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Deputy Director's Report

Teresa Parks, Deputy Director

Director gave updates on activities since the last meeting:

- The Agency along with the IL Guardianship Association and the County Public Guardian office, collaborated on a conference held on April 30 in Chicago. Included were presentations for guardians on topics from hoarding, alternatives to guardianship, and nursing home advocacy. A similar conference in Springfield is planned for the Fall.
- With the Department of Human Services (DHS) to transfer individuals served by the Office of State Guardian (OSG) out of Choate Mental Health and Developmental Center to placement in community settings, as well as on the implementation of the sex education mandate for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. DHS and GAC will work together to offer family guardians education on the role of a guardian, what they can and cannot do, their limits as well as the rights that people maintain when they have a guardian.
- Education continues for the public about decision making as an alternative to guardianship for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The Agency has given 10 presentations and recorded a podcast, featured on the Agency's website, on supported decision making.

Fiscal Report

Eric Bolinger, Chief Financial Officer

- FY26 budget passed. Despite a difficult budget year, the Agency received everything in its initial budget request.
- The Agency advocated for the passage of SB2447, which would change the fee structure that the circuit clerks across the state collect and deposit into the GAC fund. It would have been a big opportunity for the Agency, but it did not pass out of Committee.

- The Agency is busy preparing for its audit. CFO Bolinger thanked the members of the Executive team for being responsive with requests from the auditors. There will be a new member of the Fiduciary team, which will allow for streamlining tasks and moving things forward in the Fiscal department.

Legal Report

Anthony E. Rothert, General Counsel

- Counsel Rothert reported that although it was a difficult year, through a team effort, three of the Agency's initiatives were able to pass.
- The Agency will welcome a new Legislative Director, Taneka Jennings, who was previously with the Department of Human Services' legal department.
- The Commissioners were reminded to take the annual mandatory state trainings. They are available in a paper version as well as on OneNet.
- Commissioner Cassandra L. Hill has been appointed to finish Sonni Williams' term, which leaves 1 vacancy on the Commission.

Human Resources Report

Arlene Herron, Director Human Resources

- At the time of the meeting, the Agency's current headcount was 125 employees, with 10 vacancies; however, in the following week 5 employees will be hired, bringing the headcount to 130.
- There are 5 postings in motion: some are being interviewed; some are waiting for background checks.
- 2 student law interns will start in the Chicago office in the coming week. Other agencies have contacted Director Herron with their interest in hiring legal student interns, seeking advice on how to start a program.
- The Agency will begin a series of trainings for managers, particularly new managers without State government experience. Conversations have begun with Central Management Services (CMS), and they will have a 3-day training in the Fall that the new manager can attend, with topics such as employee evaluations, performance improvement plans, grievances, etc.
- Discussion has begun about succession planning and finding a way of documenting the knowledge of employees who are retiring on paper before they separate from the agency. A form has been developed and will be distributed to managers to start discussion with those employees.

PROGRAM REPORTS

Office of State Guardian

Teresa Parks on behalf of Barry Lowy, Director

- The Agency recently completed a 5-year renewal of its Panoramic database used by OSG. There are plans to upgrade the system and add more data points to better understand the work of OSG.
- The division continues to work on hiring to vacancies due to retirements in the position of Guardianship Representative.

Human Rights Authority

Teresa Parks, Director

- HRA staffing remains stable and there are no current vacancies.
- The division had a training event with OSG on some case law that had an impact on HRA cases. There was an additional training in May with the Department of Human Services' Office of Inspector General, on an overview of their investigation process, with another in-person training planned for September in Springfield.
- The HRA received guidance on voluntary admission through a session with the Legal Advocacy Services' Staff Attorney Laurel Spahn and General Counsel Rothert.
- HRA managers met with General Counsel Rothert on a potential HRA regulatory change and expect those to go through the JCAR process over the summer.
- Director Milano, General Counsel Rothert and Director Parks had an initial meeting with Illinois' 1st Lady's staff regarding the Human Rights Authority's involvement in investigating correctional facilities, specifically persons

with disabilities in those settings. The division has an ongoing collaboration with the Department of Corrections' Jail Standards Unit. One of their staff members recently became an HRA member.

- Some HRA cases have been cited in the IL Answers Project, regarding the use of restraint chairs in jails. The division received a request from the John Howard Association, which advocates for prisoner rights, to make its services available in those settings. The 1st Lady has an interest in this area, and this is just a start. There are plans for follow-up discussions with her.

Legal Advocacy Services

Veronique Baker, Director

- January 1 through May 31, LAS handled 4,232 mental health petitions in the counties where the division is available. It has had 407 hearings, and approximately 376 advanced directive interactions. There have been 15 special education cases referred to its special education attorneys, and has received 19 new appeals, with 53 appeals pending in the division.
- The work is being done by 14 mental health attorneys, 1 special education attorney, 2 paralegals for mental health, one paralegal for special education and an attorney in training who will eventually be dispatched to cover the Kane County mental health call.
- There is a position posted for a Managing Attorney in the southern part of the state, because the attorney originally hired for that position has relocated to Cook County and is now the Managing Attorney position for the northern part of the state. The Division will need to hire to replace the Peoria attorney that took a Judge position in December of last year and will need to hire an attorney for Sangamon County, with continued hopes to hire a special education attorney and paralegal for Cook County.

Chair Dew asked for a motion to move into closed session. Motion was made by Commissioner Ambrose and seconded by Commissioner Morgan. The meeting entered closed session at 11:30 am.

The meeting returned to open session at 12:19 pm.

Chair Dew reported that during closed session the Commissioners unanimously voted to appoint Tracey Fleming the new Director of the Guardianship and Advocacy Commission. He then asked for a motion for the appointment of Director Fleming. Motion was made by Commissioner Ambrose and seconded by Commissioner Kennelly. Motion passed and Director Fleming was welcomed to the Commission.

Motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Morgan and seconded by Commissioner Ambrose. Motion was unanimously passed, and the meeting was adjourned at 1:20 pm.