



**STATE OF ILLINOIS
TORTURE INQUIRY AND RELIEF COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING
Tuesday, January 27, 2026 1:30 p.m.
State of Illinois Building, 555 West Monroe Street, Lincoln Room; Chicago, IL**

IN-PERSON AND REMOTE-ACCESSIBLE MEETING

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Commissioners Present

Chair Michael Strom
Commissioner Bennett Kaplan
Commissioner Vanessa del Valle
Commissioner Johanes Maliza
Commissioner Linnet Burden
Commissioner Brian Richardson
Commissioner Tameka Walton
Commissioner Naomi Johnson
Commissioner Shobha Lakshmi Mahadev

Commissioners Absent

Commissioner Erica Zunkel
Commissioner Kafi Moragne-Patterson
Alternate Commissioner Daniel Fenske
Commissioner Ivory Snow
Commissioner Sarah Raisch

Staff Present (some via remote connection)

Aryn Evans (Executive Director)
Jennifer Crespo (General Counsel)
Daniel Thetford
Jerry Wynn
LaWanna Carter
William Marino
Silver Scales (via Webex)
Dominique Mabrey
Paola Ascensio

Natanya Pope-Sohel
John Ioakimidis
Sean Dunne
Callie Capodice
Courtney Stout
Adrienne Garner
Michael Fowler (Intern)

I. Call to Order/Members Present

On January 27, 2026 at approximately 1:35 p.m., Chair Michael Strom called the meeting of the Illinois Torture Inquiry and Relief Commission (“TIRC” or “Commission”) to order.

Physically present were Chair Michael Strom, Commissioner Bennett Kaplan, Commissioner Linnet Burden, Commissioner Vanessa del Valle, Commissioner Johanes Maliza, Commissioner Brian Richardson, Commissioner Naomi Johnson, Commissioner Shobha Lakshmi Mahadev (arrived late @ 1:45 pm) and Commissioner Tameka Walton comprising physical quorum.

The Commissioners present and able to cast binding votes were Chair Michael Strom, Commissioner Bennett Kaplan, Commissioner Linnet Burden, Commissioner Vanessa del Valle, Commissioner Johanes Maliza, Commissioner Brian Richardson, Commissioner Shobha Lakshmi Mahadev and Commissioner Tameka Walton

II. Claims

1. HEAD, Stanley (TIRC No. 2013.193-H)

Mr. Head’s claim was investigated and analyzed by TIRC's pro-bono team at Kirkland & Ellis, Carter Wietecha, Chris Koenig, Joshua Lustig and Dan Latona, as well as TIRC Chief Investigative Attorney Daniel Thetford and TIRC Paralegal Dominique Mabrey. Carter Wietecha and Chris Koenig presented this matter to the Commission and Executive Director Evans noted her concurrence with their recommendation. Director Evans noted that TIRC did perform 30-day crime victim notification in this matter and that if any relatives of the victim, KM and KW (minors at the time of the crime), were present they would be afforded an opportunity to address the Commission before it reached a decision.

Commissioner Maliza had questions regarding the direct appeal.

Commissioner Maliza and Director Evans discussed other cases involving a guilty plea, including the claim of Timothy Hall.

Commissioner del Valle had questions regarding the credibility of witnesses and evidence TIRC investigated.

Angela Westbrook, Mother of the victim, spoke on behalf of the victim.

Family members present on behalf of the Claimant did not speak.

This matter was recommended not to refer, and it was so voted not to refer by an 8-0 Commissioner vote, with Chair Michael Strom, Commissioner Kaplan, Commissioner Vanessa del Valle, Commissioner Johanes Maliza, Commissioner Linnet Burden, Commissioner Brian Richardson, Commissioner Tameka Walton and Commissioner Shobha Lakshmi Mahadev voting not to refer, and Commissioner Naomi Johnson casting non-binding advisory vote not to refer.

Director Evans thanked the team for their work on this claim.

2. MCCREE, Santana (TIRC No. 2013.131-M)

Mr. McCree's case was investigated and analyzed by TIRC Case Attorney John Ioakimidis, Chief Investigative Attorney Daniel Thetford, and Paralegal Paola Ascencio. John Ioakimidis presented this matter to the Commission and Executive Director Evans noted her concurrence with their recommendation. Director Evans noted that TIRC did perform 30-day crime victim notification in this matter and that if any relatives of the victim, Denise Williamson, were present they would be afforded an opportunity to address the Commission before it reached a decision.

Commissioner Kaplan had questions regarding inconsistency between the confession and the autopsy.

Commissioner Maliza had questions regarding the pattern and practice of the involved officers. Commissioner Maliza also had questions regarding the paramedic any injuries noted.

Commissioner Mahadev discussed the Claimant's injuries.

Commissioner Burden had questions about the Claimant's private conversation with the Assistant State's Attorney regarding his treatment by police and the defense attorney's legal strategies regarding identifying the involved officers. Commissioner Burden also had questions about evidence from the crime.

Commissioner Burden and Director Evans discussed why the written determination didn't identify the trial judge, and they also discussed the Chicago Police Department's records of its own police accused of egregious conduct and ways to warn the public about them.

Chair Strom and Commissioner del Valle discussed complaints against police officers that TIRC has and whether TIRC could create a list and make it available.

Commissioner Mahadev expressed concerns about contradictory and incomplete information. Commissioner Kaplan also had questions about any restrictions regarding disclosure of officer information being requested by subpoena versus FOIA.

No family members were present on behalf of the victim.

No family members were present on behalf of the Claimant.

This matter was recommended for referral for further judicial review, and it was so voted to refer by an 8-0 Commissioner vote, with Chair Michael Strom, Commissioner Kaplan, Commissioner Vanessa del Valle, Commissioner Johanes Maliza, Commissioner Linnet Burden, Commissioner Brian Richardson, Commissioner Tameka Walton and Commissioner Shobha Lakshmi Mahadev voting to refer, and Commissioner Naomi Johnson casting non-binding advisory vote to refer.

Director Evans thanked the team for their work on this claim.

3. WRIGHT, Marshawn (TIRC No. 2016.430-W)

Mr. Wright's claim was investigated and analyzed by TIRC' Case Attorney Natanya Pope-Sohel who presented the recommendation to the Commission, with which Executive Director Evans noted her concurrence. Director Evans noted that TIRC did perform 30-day crime victim notification in this matter and that if any relatives of the victim Sean Page were present, they would be afforded an opportunity to address the Commission before it reached a decision.

Commissioners had procedural questions regarding following up on Claimant's letter. Director Evans detailed the Commission's follow up.

Commissioners discussed the Claimant's understanding of the Commission's process and the information the Commission investigates.

Commissioner Richardson asked if there is more that the Commission should do to get the information from the Claimant and do due diligence.

Commissioners del Valle and Walton discussed the videotaped confession and reluctance to make a decision without reviewing the video.

Commissioner Maliza asked if Commission staff would investigate more.

JC commented that further investigation happens in formal inquiry and the Commission needs to go through the process of getting waivers signed.

Commissioner Kaplan had question on the processes for summary dismissal and discussed giving the claimant an opportunity to provide more detail beforehand.

Commissioner Mahadev discussed different jurisdictional questions and that some areas are not as clear as others.

Director Evans suggested the Commission take formal votes to dismiss or not to dismiss and then determine whether to enter into a full investigation and Chair Strom called for a vote.

Commissioner Johnson asked if there was anyone to speak on behalf of the Claimant before the vote.

Commissioner Walton had questions regarding how a summary dismissal can be recommended if the video was not reviewed.

No family members were present on behalf of the victim.

Velma Cotton, Mother of Claimant, was present and spoke on his behalf

This matter was recommended to dismiss, but it was voted not to dismiss by a 7-1 Commissioner vote, with Chair Michael Strom, Commissioner Kaplan, Commissioner Vanessa del Valle, Commissioner Johanes Maliza, Commissioner Brian Richardson, Commissioner Tameka Walton and Commissioner Shobha Lakshmi Mahadev voting not to dismiss, Commissioner Linnet Burden voting to dismiss, and Commissioner Naomi Johnson casting a non-binding advisory vote not to dismiss.

Chair Strom suggested the Commission take a vote on sending another letter to the Claimant or proceeding to formal inquiry, The Commission voted 5-3 to proceed to formal inquiry

Commission Burden had additional comments about the interrogation techniques used.

Commissioner Maliza commented that Claimant possibly did not understand what the questions or letters from the Commission.

Director Evans thanked the team for their work on this claim.

4. DAVIS, Clifford (TIRC No. 2012.125-D)

Mr. Davis' claim was a summary dismissal recommendation. Mr. Davis' claim was investigated by Chief Investigative Attorney, as well as our team from Kirkland and Ellis. Mr. Davis' passed away in November 2025 and we no longer have jurisdiction to complete our investigation or make a final disposition. No victim notification was required or performed.

This matter was recommended for summary dismissal, and it was so voted to dismiss by an 8-0 Commissioner vote, with Chair Michael Strom, Commissioner Kaplan, Commissioner Vanessa del Valle, Commissioner Johanes Maliza, Commissioner Linnet Burden, Commissioner Brian Richardson, Commissioner Tameka Walton and Commissioner Shobha Lakshmi Mahadev voting to dismiss. Commissioner Naomi Johnson casting non-binding advisory vote to dismiss.

No family members were present on behalf of the victim.

No family members were present on behalf of the Claimant.

III. Review and Approval of November 19, 2025 Open Session Minutes

Commissioner Del Valle moved to approve the November 19, 2025 Open Session Minutes and Commissioner Kaplan seconded the motion. Commissioners voted unanimously to approve the November 19, 2025 Open Session Minutes.

IV. Executive Director's Report

Director Evans recognized TIRC's dedicated team members for their work on the investigations. Director Evans highlighted TIRC's 2nd Annual TIRC Academy staff training program and the hiring of 4 additional staff attorneys, Callie Capodice, Sean Dunne, Adrienne Garner and Courtney Stout.

Director Evans and General Counsel Crespo will be traveling to Springfield to attend the budget hearings.

V. Public Comment

Anthony McFadden appeared in person and made a public comment regarding his claim.

VI. Adjournment

Chair Strom called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Maliza moved to adjourn the meeting and Commissioner Moragne-Patterson seconded the motion. Commissioners voted unanimously to adjourn, and the meeting adjourned at approximately 3:39 PM. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday March 24, 2026 at 1:30 PM.