



City of Milwaukee

200 E. Wells Street
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
53202

Meeting Minutes

EQUAL RIGHTS COMMISSION

TONY SNELL-RODRIGUEZ, CHAIR

NATHAN GUEQUIERRE, VICE-CHAIR

**Jacqueline Cook, William Crowley, Jessica Boling, Rae
Johnson and Paul Smith**

Staffing: Omar Barberena

Wednesday, March 26, 2025

4:00 PM

City Hall, Room 303

1. Call to Order (TS) (4:00)

Meeting was called to order at 4:01 pm

2. Roll Call (OB) (4:01)

Present 6 - VACANCY, Snell Rodriguez, Guequierre, Crowley, Boling and Johnson

Absent 2 - Cook and Smith

3. Approval of Previous Meeting (4:03)

A motion was called for approval of the previous meeting. Commissioner Crowley entertained the motion for approval and it was seconded by Commissioner Johnson. With no objection it was moved.

4. Welcome from Commissioner Chair (TS) (4:04)

Commissioner Chair Snell-Rodriguez welcomed new members and those joining this meeting.

5. Commissioners Introductions (NG/JC) (4:10)

a) Name & City of Residence

b) Occupation & Relevant Background – Share your profession and any experiences that shape your perspective.

c) Goals for the Equal Rights Commission – What impact do you hope to make this year?

d) Key Strength or Skill – Highlight a quality or expertise you bring to the Commission.

Commission Chair Nathan led formal introductions, inviting each member and attendee to introduce themselves.

In attendance were the following non-members:

- *Ramona Ramos, who will be starting as the Equal Rights Compliance Liaison for the City of Milwaukee*
- *David Gelting, representing the Reference Legislative Bureau*
- *Elle Halo (virtual), a recommended volunteer Commissioner*

- *Alysia Mullins, community member and advocate*
- *Deanna Richardson, representing the Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council*
- *Solana Patterson Ramos, representing the Milwaukee Food Council*

6. Onboardding (TS/Attorney) (4:25)

Equal Rights Commission Overview

- **Chapter 109 Summary – Brief explanation of the legal framework guiding the Commission’s work.**
- **Relationship to the Office of Equity and Inclusion (OEI) – How the Commission collaborates with OEI to advance equity and inclusion.**
- **Mission Statement – Core purpose and values driving the Commission’s efforts.**
- **Meeting Schedule & Attendance Expectations – Frequency of meetings, required participation, and quorum requirements.**

Key Focus Areas for 2025:

- a) Increasing awareness of the complaint process.
- b) Handling and addressing complaints.
- c) Re-establishing the committee system to enhance efficiency and impact.

Quorum & Open Meeting Rules

- **Definition of Quorum – Minimum attendance required for official decision-making.**
- **Open Meetings Compliance – Transparency requirements, public access to meetings, and procedural obligations.**

Internal & External Communication Procedures

- **Internal Communication – Best practices for coordination among Commissioners and with OEI.**
- **External Communication – Guidelines for engaging with the public, stakeholders, and media while maintaining alignment with Commission policies.**

Commission Chair Snell-Rodriguez provided a brief overview of the Equal Rights Commission, including a summary of Chapter 109 and an explanation of its legal framework. She also discussed the Commission’s relationship with the Office of Equity and Inclusion.

Equal Rights Specialist Omar Barberena followed with a reading of the Commission’s mission statement, emphasizing the principles guiding the Commission’s work. Key focus areas were highlighted:

- *Community engagement*
- *Meeting schedule and attendance expectations*
- *Increasing public awareness and promoting compliance*

Additional discussion centered on communication strategies both among Commissioners and with members of the community. The Commission also explored the reestablishment of its committee structure and the need for strategic planning moving forward.

Finally, members discussed changing the regular meeting time from 4:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

7. Equal Rights Commission (ERC) and City Updates (TS & OB) (4:40)

The Equal Rights Liaison position has been filled and will be starting Monday 31st. In addition, two new Volunteer Equal Rights Commissioner members has been recommended and might be on the Common Council meeting on April 9th for appointment.

8. Break (4:45)

No break was taken and meeting continued on.

9. Committee Overview (NG) (4:50)

A) Overall Structure

The Commission is organized into four key committees, each focused on a specific area of impact:

- 1. Governance – Ensuring compliance with policies, bylaws, and legal requirements.**
- 2. Compliance – Managing complaint intake, investigations, and enforcement.**
- 3. Outreach – Engaging the community, increasing visibility, and fostering partnerships.**
- 4. Communication – Publicizing the Commission’s work, managing messaging, and improving public access to resources.**

B) Committee Composition

- Each committee is made up of Commissioners with relevant expertise or interest.
- Committees may include external advisors or community partners when appropriate.

C) Internal Governance

- Committees operate under clear guidelines for decision-making and reporting.
- Regular updates are provided to the full Commission to ensure alignment with overall goals.

D) Goal Setting

- Each committee establishes specific, measurable objectives aligned with the Commission’s priorities.
- Progress is reviewed regularly to ensure accountability and impact.

E) Meeting Frequency

- Committees will meet regularly based on workload and priorities, with a recommended schedule to maintain progress.
- Meetings should align with Commission sessions to provide updates and ensure coordination among all committees.

Commissioner Nathan provided an overview of the committee structure, highlighting the four key focus areas: Governance, Compliance, Outreach, and Communication. He emphasized that each area presents opportunities for targeted work and meaningful contributions.

Commissioner Tony discussed the importance of goal setting, particularly as the Commission moves toward having a full roster of members. He encouraged

commissioners to align with a committee of their interest to ensure balanced participation and avoid burnout.

The group also addressed the frequency of committee meetings, noting that scheduling should be driven by workload and priority. It was agreed that committee meetings should be coordinated with Commission sessions to allow for consistent updates and alignment across all committees.

10. Committees & Membership (NG or JC) (5:00)

A) Reinstating the Committee Structure

- Evaluate and reactivate the committee system to enhance the Commission's effectiveness.
- Ensure committees align with current priorities and operational needs.

B) Key Committees for 2025

- Determine whether to maintain all three existing committees or refine the structure to better support ERC's key objectives.
- Focus on the most pressing priorities, such as complaint resolution, policy compliance, outreach, and public engagement.

C) Committee Assignments

1. Mapping Skills to Committees – Commissioners will assess their strengths and interests to determine the best fit.
2. Selection Process – Each Commissioner will write their first and second committee choices on the board to facilitate balanced assignments.

Due to time constraints, discussion on Committees & Membership, including the identification of Key Committees for 2025 and Committee Assignments, will be deferred to a future meeting.

11. Adjourn (TS) (5:29)

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Tony and it was seconded by Commissioner Bill. With no objection the meeting was adjourned at 5:25pm.

In the event that Common Council members who are not members of this committee attend this meeting, this meeting may also simultaneously constitute a meeting of the Common Council or any of the following committees: Community and Economic Development, Finance and Personnel, Judiciary and Legislation, Licenses, Public Safety and Health, Public Works, Zoning, Neighborhoods & Development, and/or Steering and Rules. Whether a simultaneous meeting is occurring depends on whether the presence of one or more of the Common Council member results in a quorum of the Common Council or any of the above committees, and, if there is a quorum of another committee, whether any agenda items listed above involve matters within that committee's realm of authority. In the event that a simultaneous meeting is occurring, no action other than information gathering will be taken at the simultaneous meeting.

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