



# 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, Paul  
Smith, Elle Halo and Alexandria Staubach*

*Staffing: Omar Barberena*

---

Wednesday, December 17, 2025

4:00 PM

City Hall - Room 301A

---

#### 1. Call to Order

*The meeting was called to order at 4:05 pm*

#### 2. Roll Call

**Present** 4 - Snell Rodriguez, Guequierre, Crowley and Smith

**Absent** 3 - Cook, Halo and Staubach

**Excused** 1 - Boling

#### 3. Approval of November Minutes

*A quorum was not present for the approval of November minutes*

#### 4. Welcome from Chair

*Recognition of Holidays and Observances*

*The Commission recognized and honored the following December observances:*

- HIV and AIDS Awareness Month*
- International Human Rights Day / Universal Human Rights Month*
- International Day for People with Disabilities (December 3rd)*
- Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, and other cultural and religious holidays.*

**5. Omar Barberena - Equal Rights Specialist**

- **International Human Rights Day Event Updates - December 6, 2025**
- **Target date for 2026 - December 5th**
- **Complaints Calls and Walk-ins updates**

**Ramona Ramos - Equal Rights Complaints Liaison**

- **Online Complaint System Update**
- **Hmong event update on December 14, 2025**

*Staff & Liaison Reports**A. Equal Rights Specialist (Omar Barberena)*

- *International Human Rights Day Event (Dec 6): Reported a successful event with ~59 participants out of 109 registered. Positive feedback was received on programming, panelists, and networking. The target date for next year is December 5, 2026.*
- *Future Planning: Suggested using the same venue (MIAD) and caterer for the 2026 event to streamline logistics and focus on programming. Recommended exploring enhanced virtual participation options (e.g., live chat/Q&A).*
- *Complaints Update: Received 5 complaints in December related to:*
  1. *Parking*
  2. *Employment (Lawful Source of Income)*
  3. *Disability*
  4. *Homelessness (2 complaints)*
- *Action Items: Complaints based on lawful source of income and homelessness status will be formally referred to the City Attorney's office for jurisdictional review. Disability-related complaints are being addressed with resource referrals.*

*B. Complaints Liaison (Ramona Ramos)*

- *Data & Process Clarification: Distinguished between general inquiries (e.g., parking, city services) and official ERC complaints filed via the online form. Emphasized the "case management" approach to referrals with ongoing follow-up.*
- *2024-2025 Activity Summary:*
  - o *Complaints: 27 (2024) vs. 41 (Jan-Nov 2025).*
  - o *Calls/Emails/Walk-ins: Tracked from April-Nov 2025 (205 calls, 164 emails, 15 walk-ins).*
  - o *Events & Outreach: Participation in 9+ community events (e.g., Juneteenth, Pride Fest, Hmong New Year) was highly impactful.*
  - o *Trends: Employment is the leading complaint category in 2025. Many complaints involve intersecting protected classes (e.g., race and disability).*
- *Technology Update: An online complaint app is in development with IT, with a goal for a Q1 2026 pilot launch. Collaboration with data analytics to create performance dashboards is underway.*
- *City Hall Events: Noted the historic Ballroom event for World AIDS Day and a TDOR celebration held at City Hall.*

*C. External Partner (Megan Wanke, Fair Housing Council)*

- *Report Delivery: The Fair Housing Council's initial community report on discrimination against rental voucher holders will be sent to the ERC electronically and via hard copy in late December/early January.*
- *January Presentation: Accepted an invitation to present the report's findings at the January 2026 ERC meeting, potentially with additional leadership from the Fair Housing Council.*
- *Training Offer: Offered to provide no-cost Fair Housing training to the Commission in*

2026.

**6. Communication from Committees**

**• Governance Committee**

**a. New Recruitment Update - Hearing postponed by Judiciary and Legislative Committee until January 2025 meeting**

**b. Strategic planning for 2025**

- Identifying departments to invite for presentations**
- Reviewing past year activities and goals**

*Committee Reports*

*A. Governance Committee (Commissioner Guequierre)*

- Appointments: New Commissioner appointments are pending before the Common Council's Judiciary & Legislation Committee, with an expected review on January 12, 2026.*
- Annual Report: Preparing the 2025 Annual Report, incorporating data provided by staff.*
- Departmental Reports (Ch. 109): Discussed inviting city departments to present to the ERC in 2026. Initial suggestions included the Housing Authority (HACM), Department of Neighborhood Services (DNS), and the Treasurer's Office. A goal of three departmental reports, spread throughout the year, was proposed.*
- Commissioner Training: Identified a need for formal training on the complaint's adjudication process in preparation for future case hearings.*
- LGBTQ+ Work Group: Commissioner Snell Rodriguez will draft a charter for a new LGBTQ+-focused work group/committee, to be reviewed by the Governance Committee.*

*New Business & Strategic Planning for 2026*

- Community "Know Your Rights" Trainings: Discussed potential collaboration with community organizations (e.g., Turners, VDLEF) to host "Know Your Rights" and de-escalation trainings in response to community concerns about immigration enforcement.*
- 2026 Calendar Planning: Stressed the importance of finalizing a comprehensive 2026 calendar early in Q1, including:*
  - o Departmental reports.*
  - o Key community outreach events.*
  - o Meetings of the ad-hoc Complaints Committee (to be reconvened with a focus on housing).*
  - o Commissioner training sessions.*
- Administrative Reminders: Commissioners were reminded to direct all scheduling and technical issues to Equal Rights Specialist Omar Barberena via official email and to confirm their attendance (in-person/virtual) for meetings.*

**7. Community Announcements**

*Community Announcements*

- Commissioner Smith announced:*
  - o A New Year's Eve Sobriety Pow Wow at the WICOM campus (33rd & Kilbourne).*
  - o A Native American Tourism of Wisconsin Winter Gala at Potawatomi Casino on January 30, 2026.*
  - o A "Know Your Rights" event with MIC and Emilio at Turners in January (date TBD).*

## 8. Adjournment

### *Closing Reflections & Adjournment*

- *Commissioners and staff shared closing words summarizing their year with the ERC: Community, Progress, Productivity, Fight, "Going Small," Resilience, Steadiness, and Clarity.*
- *With no objections, the meeting was adjourned at 5:26 PM.*