



# 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, Paul Smith, Elle Halo and Alexandria Staubach*

*Staffing: Omar Barberena*

---

Wednesday, October 15, 2025

4:00 PM

City Hall - Room 301A

---

#### 1. Call to Order

*This meeting was called to Order at 4:03 pm*

#### 2. Roll Call

**Present** 10 - VACANCY, VACANCY, Snell Rodriguez, Crowley, Boling, Cook, Smith, Johnson, Halo and Staubach

**Excused** 1 - Guequierre

#### 3. Approval of September Minutes

*• The minutes from the September meeting were approved without changes or objections.*

#### 4. Welcome from Chair

*• The Chair recognized numerous heritage and awareness months, including:*

- o Breast Cancer Awareness Month*
- o Indigenous Peoples' Day*
- o German, Polish, Filipino, and Italian American Heritage Months*
- o Domestic Violence Awareness Month*
- o National Disabilities Employment Awareness Month*
- o LGBTQ History Month*

*• Upcoming observances were noted: Diwali (Oct 17-23) and past World Inclusion Day and National Coming Out Day.*

## 5. Communication from Office of Equity and Inclusion Staff

### Omar Barberena - Equal Rights Specialist

- Commissioners Accounts & Usage
- International Human Rights Day Planning Committee Updates
- Volunteer Request for Event

### Ramona Ramos - Equal Rights Complaints Liaison

- Ad Hoc Complaints Group Update
- Walk-ins Update
- Online Complaint System
- Events

*Guest Speaker: Small Business Administration (SBA)*

- *Presenter: Elise Hillman, Public Affairs Specialist.*
- *Topic: Assistance for those impacted by recent flooding.*

*Key Points:*

*o SBA offers low-interest, fixed-rate loans to homeowners, renters, businesses, and non-profits.*

*o Assistance is available for both physical damage (deadline: November 10) and economic injury (deadline: June 11, 2026).*

*o Applicants are encouraged to visit Disaster Recovery Centers, call, or email for in-person assistance.*

*o There are no strict minimum or maximum qualifications; the SBA works with all applicants.*

*o Materials are available in both English and Spanish.*

*Office of Equity and Inclusion (OEI) & Staff Updates*

- *Email Issues: Commissioners were reminded to check their official city emails and report any problems*

*International Human Rights Day Planning – Oma Barberena*

- *Event Theme: "Unpacking Democracy and Human Rights."*
- *Date & Time: December 10, 2025; 10:00 AM - ~2:00 PM.*
- *Confirmed/Potential Panelists (4 total sought):*
  - o Immigration/Refugee Voice: Christine Neumann-Ortiz (Voces de la Frontera).*
  - o Youth & Democracy: A representative from the Milwaukee Youth Council (meeting scheduled).*
  - o LGBTQ+ & Trans Community: Considering Yante Turner (GSAFE, Son Speaker MKE) or Dante Turner (Sun Seekers MKE).*
  - o Civil Rights Legal Perspective: Considering a former U.S. Attorney or other legal expert.*
- *Volunteers & Roles:*
  - o MC: Jessica Boling (to confirm schedule).*
  - o Moderator: Commissioner Elle Halo.*
  - o Closing Remarks: Suggestion to invite former Commissioner Martha Collins.*
- *Logistics: Venue is booked. Organizing catering, ASL interpreters, and flyers. A final panelist list is needed by October 23 to begin marketing.*
- *Complaints Process & Outreach – Ramona Ramos*
  - o The online complaint app pilot is pending ITMD rollout.*
  - o Staff is being cross-trained on ADA compliance.*

- o The physical office for the Equal Rights Specialist is moving to the Office of Community Wellness and Safety (13th & Forest Home).
- o Plans are in motion to offer walk-in complaint services at various locations across the city, including public libraries and the Office of African American Affairs, to improve accessibility.
- o Summer outreach events were successful in raising community awareness.
- o Upcoming event: The ERC will have a booth at the Milwaukee Hmong New Year (December 13-14).
- Policy & Legal Developments:
  - o Exploring a new remedy by working with the City Licensing division to address discrimination by licensed businesses.
  - o The City Attorney's office is updating the protected class matrix to reflect federal changes; an update is expected by November 1.
  - o Discussed the need to potentially amend Chapter 109 to broaden the ERC's authority and jurisdiction over more protected classes, as many complainants want to resolve issues locally rather than with state/federal agencies (which are experiencing long delays, especially during the government shutdown).
  - o For complaints outside its jurisdiction, the ERC is developing a process to send informational letters to involved parties without making formal allegations.

**6. Communication from Committees**

- **Governance Committee**
  - a. **New Recruitment Update**
  - b. **Commissioner Handbook Draft – Update**

- **Communications Committee**
  - a. **Update**

*No communication from Committees at this time as Commissioner Guequierre is excused today*

**7. Community Announcements**

- **Transgender Day of Remembrance:** Commissioner Halo announced a "Cedar Celebration Week of Action" from November 20-21, coordinated with the LGBT Community Center. This will include a reception before the November ERC meeting.
- **Upcoming November ERC Meeting:** Will feature a presentation from the LGBT Community Center's Executive Director, Richie Martin, on LGBTQ+ and trans issues/violence in Milwaukee.
  - o The meeting will include a public testimony period for community members, particularly those affected by anti-trans violence (e.g., a recent incident on a city bus).
  - o Commissioners were strongly encouraged to attend this meeting in person to honor the community members sharing their experiences.

**8. Adjournment**

- The meeting was adjourned with no objections and not further business: 5:30pm

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.

Upon reasonable notice, efforts will be made to accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities through sign language interpreters or auxiliary aids. For additional information or to request this service, contact the City Clerk's Office ADA Coordinator at (414) 286-3475, (FAX) (414) 286-2025, (TDD) (414) 286-2025 or by writing to the Coordinator at Room 205, City Hall, 200 E. Wells Street, Milwaukee, WI 53202.

City Hall and the Zeidler Municipal Building are accessible by "The Hop" City Hall Stations, the MCTS Green Line, Connect 1, 14, 15, 18, 19, 30, 33, and 57 bus routes. Visit <https://www.ridemcts.com/> for more information.

Bike racks are available on Water Street, Market Street, and Broadway, and a Bublr Bike Share station is located on the northeast corner of Kilbourn Avenue and Water Street.

Limited parking for persons attending meetings during normal business hours is available at reduced rates (5 hour limit) at the Associated Bank River Center on the southwest corner of Kilbourn Avenue and Water Street. You must present a copy of the meeting notice to the parking cashier.

Persons engaged in lobbying as defined in s. 305-43-4 of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances are required to register with the City Clerk's Office License Division. Registered lobbyists appearing before a Common Council committee are required to identify themselves as such. More information is available at <http://city.milwaukee.gov/Lobbying>.