



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, July 23, 2025

4:00 PM

City Hall - 301-A

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to Order at 4:02pm

2. Roll Call

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

Excused 1 - Boling

3. Approval of Previous Minutes

A motion for Approval of Previous Meeting was called by Commissioner Guequierre. It was seconded by Commissioner Smith. With no objection it was moved for approval

4. Welcome from Chair

Delivered by Chair Tony Snell-Rodriguez (Key Points)

Inclusive Restroom Policy Update:

•The Inclusive Restroom Policy, recommended by the Equal Rights Commission and approved by the Common Council, is now in implementation.

•DPW (Department of Public Works) has reported progress:

o Conversion of all single-use restrooms to inclusive restrooms is underway.

o Signage updates are being addressed to reflect inclusive language.

•Challenges identified:

o Restrooms that are inclusive but not ADA-accessible have required additional planning.

o ADA (federal) law supersedes local policy; guidance has been followed to ensure legal compliance.

o Signage is being used to redirect users to the nearest accessible restroom as

needed.

- Implementation involves multiple city buildings and spans a lengthy spreadsheet of locations.

- DPW is working diligently, and this effort is acknowledged as a significant accomplishment.

- Appreciation expressed to:

- o Former and current Commissioner Halo for early advocacy.

- o DPW, NDNS, and all who collaborated to move the initiative forward.

- DPW leadership has reaffirmed commitment to continue overseeing the process.

Introduction of Chief Equity Officer:

- Chair recognized the presence of Bernadette Karanja, Chief Equity Officer for the City of Milwaukee.

- Ms. Karanja offered introductory remarks:

- o Welcomed and thanked Commissioners Staubach, Cook (Online), Johnson (Online), Nathan, Smith, Halo (Online), and Crowley.

- o Acknowledged progress toward a fully staffed Commission (only two vacancies remain).

- o Commended the Commission's work on Chapter 109 amendments and adoption of standard operating procedures.

- o Emphasized the importance of the Commission's work in upholding equal rights in the community.

- o Offered her direct support and introduced team members Omar Barberena (ERC Specialist) and Ramona as Complaint Liaison.

- o Expressed gratitude for the collaborative work moving forward.

5. Resolution on Facial Recognition Technology

Motion Regarding Facial Recognition Technology (FRT)

- Motion Made & Seconded

- o Commissioner Rae Johnson moved the resolution opposing FRT implementation by Milwaukee Police Department (MPD)

- o Commissioner Smith seconded the motion

- Resolution Read Aloud (Key excerpts):

Whereas clauses:

- o FRT poses documented risks to civil rights, privacy, and freedom from discrimination, disproportionately impacting BIPOC, transgender individuals, and marginalized communities

- o Legislative Reference Bureau research confirms FRT's potential for disproportionate impacts/inaccuracies

- o Public testimony and national civil rights organizations have expressed concerns about FRT's chilling effect on trust in law enforcement

- o Lack of transparent MPD policy on FRT fails to guarantee prevention of discrimination

Resolved clauses:

- ERC formally opposes MPD's implementation/use of FRT

- Chair directed to draft and submit formal letter to:

- MPD Chief of Police

- Milwaukee Common Council

- Mayor of Milwaukee

- Fire and Police Commission

- Letter to include: ERC findings, LRB research, public testimony, and official opposition to FRT due to unacceptably high risks

- Discussion on motion among Commissioners took place
- Chair called for roll call vote with options:
 - Yes/Yay (in favor)
 - No/Nay (opposed)
 - Abstain

Vote Results:

Commissioner Vote

<i>Commissioner Staubach</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Commissioner Elle Halo</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Commissioner Smith</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Commissioner Rae Johnson</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Commissioner Crowley</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Commissioner Jacqueline Cook</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Commissioner Boling (Excused)</i>	<i>Absence</i>
<i>Vice Chair Guequierre</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Chair Tony Snell Rodriguez</i>	<i>Yes</i>

Outcome:

- Unanimously approved (8-0)
- Motion carries; resolution passes

Next Steps:

- Begin implementation of resolution directives:
 - Draft formal opposition letter to MPD Chief of Police
 - Distribute copies to:
 - Milwaukee Common Council
 - Mayor's Office
 - Fire and Police Commission

Chair's Closing Remarks:

- Acknowledged attendees
- Encouraged community members to bring matters before the Commission

6. Communication from Office of Equity and Inclusion Staff

Omar Barberena - Equal Rights Specialist

- Equal Rights Commission Website
- Commissioners' Email Accounts
- Human Rights Day Planning Committee

Ramona Ramos - Equal Rights Complaints Liaison

- Ad Hoc Complaints Group
- Walk-ins
- Website
- IT Data System
- Events

Equal Rights Specialist - Omar Barberena
 •Commissioner Materials

- o Website updates pending:
 - Request for updated head shots from Commissioners
- o Reminder to use official city email accounts:
 - Instructions resent to those needing access
 - Critical for maintaining public records compliance
- Human Rights Planning Committee
 - o Progress update:
 - Theme selection in progress
 - Venue considerations:
 - Evaluating Turner Hall (parking challenges noted)
 - Exploring alternative locations with free parking options
 - o Meeting schedule: Biweekly Fridays
- Mandatory Ethics Training
 - o Scheduled: August 7th at 12:00 PM (Virtual)
 - o Trainer: Assistant City Attorney Peter Block
 - o Topics:
 - Public meeting laws
 - Open records compliance
 - Proper use of city email systems
- Communications Update
 - o New Commissioner Update newsletter distributed (credit to Omar Barbarena)
 - o Social media reminders:
 - Active platforms: Facebook, Twitter
 - o Legistar Transition:
 - All agendas/minutes now hosted on Legistar platform
 - Website to redirect to Legistar for transparency

Complaints Liaison - Ramona Ramos

I. Ad Hoc Complaints Committee Update

- Progress:
 - o Revising online complaint form (focus: signature section visibility/accessibility).
 - o Next meeting scheduled for early August to finalize updates.
- Goal: Streamline process to minimize time burden on committee members.

II. Walk-In Wednesday Program

•Launch: Weekly in-person complaint intake every Wednesday (9:00 AM–3:30 PM, City Hall Room 603).

- Details:
 - o No appointment needed; bilingual support (English/Spanish).
 - o Flyers available (to be updated with lunch break hours).
 - o Promoted via E-Notify (350+ subscribers), social media, and press releases.
- Purpose: Serve residents lacking digital access or preferring face-to-face assistance.

III. Complaint Processing Improvements

- Current Workflow:
 - o 5–6 formal complaints monthly + high volume of referrals (non-jurisdictional cases).
 - o Detailed case notes maintained in secure spreadsheets.
- IT System Proposal:
 - o Developing centralized app with:
 - Secure login, real-time tracking, automated alerts.
 - Reference numbers for all inquiries (even referred cases).
 - Zip code data for annual reporting/constituent analysis.
 - o Collaboration with ITMD and City Attorney's Office (Andrea Fowler).

IV. Outreach Events

- Upcoming Events:

- o July 31: ADA 35th Anniversary (Independence First; Chair Rodriguez speaking).
- o August 3: Brownsville St. Cultural Art Festival (volunteers needed).
- o August 22–24: Mexican Fiesta.
- o September 6: Silver City Festival (Via CDC; 12:00–5:00 PM).
- o September 21: Puerto Rican Festival (Henry Maier Festival Park).
- Request: Commissioners to propose additional events (target: 2/month).
- V. Additional Announcements
- Swag Inventory: Bags, water bottles, chapstick, pens available.
- o Updating postcards to include "gender identity" designation.

7. Communication from Committees

- **Governance Committee**
- **Ad Hoc Budget Committee**
- **Communications Committee**

Governance Committee Report

- Recruitment Update
 - o Received 4-5 new Commissioner applications (resumes circulated by Omar)
 - o Outreach expanded to Latino/Hispanic organizations via direct notifications
 - o Formal review process to begin next month
- Budget Subcommittee Formation
 - o Proposal to create ad hoc budget committee for:
 - Tracking ERC expenditures (swag, training, Human Rights Day contributions)
 - Developing standardized budget request processes
 - o Structure and scope to be finalized in upcoming meetings
- Communications Committee Launch
 - o Motion Approved: Established as standing committee
 - o Leadership: Commissioner Rae Johnson appointed as Chair
 - o Initial Tasks:
 - Review/update committee charter (available on ERC website)
 - Develop protected-class-specific outreach materials (per Bernadette Karanja's request)
 - Align branding across all platforms (social media, E-Notify, print)
 - o Members: Commissioners Halo and additional volunteers
- 2024 Annual Report
 - o Draft in progress, targeting September completion
 - o Will highlight:
 - Resolution outcomes (e.g., FRT opposition)
 - Complaint data by ZIP code/district
 - Event participation metrics
- Training: Ethics/compliance session confirmed for August 7 (12:00 PM, virtual)

8. Community Announcements

- Commission Social Event Planning
 - o Proposed: Casual summer gathering at:
 - Chill on the Hill (Tuesdays @ Humboldt Park) or
 - Washington Park Wednesdays
 - o Format: 1-2 hour informal meet up with families

o Winter retreat proposed for 2026 strategic planning

9. Adjournment

Adjournment

- Motion to Adjourn: Commissioner Vice-Chair Guequierre*
- Second: Commissioner Smith*
- Vote: Unanimous consent*
- Meeting Concluded: 5:25 pm*