



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, May 21, 2025

4:00 PM

City Hall Room 301-B

1. Call to Order

This meeting was Called to Order at 4:05 pm.

2. Roll Call

Present 7 - Snell Rodriguez, Crowley, Boling, Cook, Smith, Johnson and Halo

Excused 2 - Guequierre and Staubach

3. Approval of Previous Meeting

A motion to Approve Previous Meeting brought up by Commissioner Cook and seconded by Commissioner Johnson with no objections. So, it moved.

4. Welcome from Chair

Chair's Welcome Remarks

Delivered by Chair Tony Snell-Rodriguez

- *Chair Tony Snell-Rodriguez opened the meeting and welcomed all Commissioners and attendees.*
- *Noted that there would be a report from the Communications Committee and a community member during the meeting.*
- *Acknowledged and reminded the group that Cinco de Mayo celebrations would be observed earlier this year.*
- *Expressed appreciation for everyone's presence and continued participation in the work of the Commission.*

5. Communication from Office of Equity and Inclusion Staff

- **Omar Barberena – Equal Rights Specialist**
- **Ramona Ramos – Equal Rights Complaints Liaison**
- **Fatima (Tima) Guled – Department of Administration**
- **Jason Ostrowski – ADA Coordinator**

Office of Equity and Inclusion (OEI) Updates

- *Omar Barberena (Equal Rights Specialist) provided updates on behalf of the OEI.*
 - o Chief Officer was unable to attend due to prior commitments but expressed strong support for the Commissions' work.*
 - o Introduced the Commissioners Corner newsletter (internal) to keep commissioners and staff informed.*
 - Requested feedback for improvements.*
 - Developed in collaboration with the OEI team.*
 - o Milwaukee.gov email transition:*
 - All members should now have access.*
 - Issues with the Outlook portal were noted (Rae Johnson reported it as non-functional).*
 - Emphasized the importance of using official emails over personal accounts.*
 - o Human Rights State Planning Committee:*
 - First meeting scheduled for the upcoming Friday.*
 - Open to community participation (contact: Obarbe@milwaukee.gov).*

Ramona Ramos (Equal Rights Complaints Liaison) – Updates

- *Backlog Organization:*
 - o Reviewed and sorted pending complaints to determine jurisdiction.*
 - o Redirected non-ERC cases to appropriate agencies.*
- *IT Support System Development:*
 - o Creating a more efficient complaint-tracking system with case numbers for better documentation.*
- *Ad Hoc Complaints Committee:*
 - o Members: Jacqueline Cook, Alexandria Staubach, William Crawley, Megan & Carnda Dupree (Fair Housing Council).*
 - o Focus areas:*
 - Refining the online complaint form.*
 - Improving referral processes to meet the 300-day deadline for complaints.*

Tima Guled (Department of Administration) – Was not able to make it

Jason Ostrowski (ADA Coordinator) – Announcement

- *35th Anniversary of the ADA (proposed date: July 22, 2024):*
 - o Proposed collaboration with Independence First for a luncheon/presentation.*
 - o Seeking Commission support to engage alders and council members.*
 - o Event planning in preliminary stages; potential larger City Hall event in 2025.*

Additional Discussion

1. Swearing-In of New Commissioners

- o Elle Halo and Alexandria Staubach to be sworn in via phone with the City Clerk ahead of the June meeting.*
- o Ceremonial swearing-in planned for the June meeting.*

6. Communication from City Attorney

City Attorney's Office – Andrea Fowler

- *No formal report was presented.*
- *Attorney Fowler attended in a supportive capacity to ensure legal compliance, including adherence to open records laws.*
- *Requested to be removed as a standing agenda item unless legal consultation is specifically required.*
- *Offered to attend future meetings on an as-needed basis.*
- *Note: Attorney Fowler excused herself early from the meeting due to illness but remains available for legal review outside of meetings.*

Action Item:

- *The Commission will adjust future agendas to include the City Attorney's Office only when legal counsel is requested or anticipated.*

7. Communication from Legislative Reference Bureau

1. *Legislative Reference Bureau (LRB) Update (Dave Gelting)*
 - o *Currently tracking local/state legislation on facial recognition technology (FRT); no new bills filed yet.*
 - o *Will expand research to:*
 - *Wisconsin cities (beyond Madison) using or banning FRT.*
 - *Peer cities (e.g., Minneapolis, Indianapolis) for comparative policies.*
 - o *LRB maintains a list of comparable cities based on demographics/population for analysis.*
2. *Commissioner Requests*
 - o *Data on racial disparities in FRT use (e.g., false arrests of Black/Hispanic individuals).*
 - o *Clarity on complaint jurisdiction: Whether FRT-related discrimination complaints could fall under ERC's purview (pending legal review).*
3. *June Meeting Planning (Discussion)*
 - o *Testimony slots:*
 - *15 minutes each for MPD and Fire & Police Commission (FPC).*
 - *30 minutes for public comment (3 minutes per speaker).*
 - o *Outreach:*
 - *E-notify and social media to solicit community input.*
 - *Encourage testimony from advocacy groups (e.g., ACLU, NAACP, Planned Parenthood).*

8. Communication from Governance Committee

Governance Committee Meeting Highlights (May 14, 2024)

Attendees: Nathan (Chair), Omar Barberena, Commissioner Paul Smith

Key Discussion Points

1. *Commissioner Recruitment:*
 - o *Final Vacancy: Actively seeking to fill one remaining seat, prioritizing demographic representation (e.g., underrepresented communities).*
 - o *Process: Revisiting past applicants, leveraging professional networks/chambers, and accepting new recommendations.*
2. *Commissioner Matrix:*
 - o *All commissioners to complete the skills/demographics matrix to assess expertise, backgrounds, and capacity for ERC initiatives.*
3. *Committee Structure:*
 - o *Communications Committee: Proposal to transition the ad hoc group to a standing*

committee (vote required).

Focus: Social media, annual reports, and public outreach.

o Budget Planning: Ad hoc committee to review 2024 funds and plan for 2025 (e.g., International Human Rights Day events).

4. Annual Report:

o Deadline: Submit to the mayor by end of July 2024 (originally due January 2024).

o Template: Using Nathan's pre-approved format to streamline data collection (e.g., complaint stats, accomplishments).

5. New Commissioner Onboarding:

o Handbook Update: Revising to reflect current processes (e.g., roles, meeting schedules).

o Team Building: Opportunities for commissioners to collaborate and align on priorities.

9. Communication from Communications Ad Hoc Committee

Communications Committee Update

Key Discussion Points

1. Transition from Ad Hoc to Standing Committee:

o Charge Development: Commissioners Rae Johnson and Elle Halo will draft a formal charge for a standing Communications Committee (to be voted on in June).

o Scope: Oversee ERC's public-facing materials (website, social media, event flyers) and ensure consistent messaging.

2. Immediate Priorities:

o Website Revamp:

Update bios/photos of new commissioners.

Simplify language (e.g., replace bureaucratic jargon with community-friendly content).

Add QR codes for dynamic resources.

o Event Outreach:

Finalize flyers for Pride Fest (June 6–7) and Juneteenth (June 19).

Recruit commissioner volunteers for booth shifts (sign-up sheet in Commissioners Corner newsletter).

3. Operational Challenges:

o City Email Access: Ongoing IT issues prevent some commissioners from accessing official accounts (Omar to communicate with IT and resolve issue).

o Protocols & On Boarding: New commissioners need clarity on processes (e.g., approving content changes, event protocols).

10. Community Announcements

Community Testimony – Emilio De Torre (Milwaukee Turners)

Key Concerns Raised:

1. Racial Bias & Civil Rights Risks:

o Facial Recognition Technology (FRT) has documented inaccuracies, disproportionately misidentifying Black, Asian, and darker-skinned individuals (e.g., false arrests in Detroit, NJ).

o MIT/NIST studies show error rates up to 100x higher for people of color.

2. Federal & Foreign Surveillance Risks:

o Data could be accessed by federal agencies (e.g., ICE) or foreign-owned companies (e.g., Biometrika's parent company, fined for bribery).

o Integration with existing systems (Flock cameras, drones, social media) enables mass surveillance.

3. *Lack of Local Control:*
 - o *No safeguards prevent misuse or federal overreach.*
 - o *Milwaukee Police Department (MPD) already uses FRT without SOPs and seeks to expand via a \$2.5M contract trading biometric data of arrestees (75% unconvicted).*
4. *Peer City Precedents:*
 - o *Madison, San Francisco, Boston, and others banned FRT; ACLU-WI recommends a 2-year moratorium.*

Supporting Evidence:

- *Wrongful arrests (e.g., Robert Williams, Porcha Woodruff).*
- *Flock cameras/Nova AI amplify real-time tracking risks.*
- *11 of 15 Milwaukee alders oppose FRT.*

Commission Discussion & Next Steps

1. *Immediate Actions:*
 - o *Request written testimony from MPD, Fire & Police Commission (FPC), and Mayor's Office for the June 18 meeting.*
 - o *Invite public comment and community stakeholders (e.g., ACLU, NAACP).*
2. *Policy Recommendations:*
 - o *Draft a resolution supporting:*
 - A moratorium on FRT use by city agencies.*
 - Creation of a Community Tech Advisory Board for oversight.*
 - Mandate transparency audits and council approval for surveillance tech.*
3. *Research Requests:*
 - o *Legislative Reference Bureau (LRB) to compile:*
 - Peer city ordinances (e.g., Madison's FRT ban).*
 - Best practices for surveillance tech regulation.*
4. *June Meeting Agenda:*
 - o *Dedicate significant time to FRT testimony/deliberation.*
 - o *Distribute Emilio's full testimony, ACLU moratorium language, and Flock camera maps to commissioners.*

Action Items

- *Staff/Omar: Contact MPD, FPC, and Mayor's Office for June testimony.*
- *LRB: Research model ordinances and legal frameworks.*
- *Commissioners: Review materials and prepare draft resolution for June vote.*

Goal: Formalize a commission recommendation to the Common Council and Mayor by July 2024.

11. Adjournment

*Motion: Commissioner Bowling moved to adjourn; seconded by Commissioner Cook.
Time: Meeting adjourned at 5:35 PM.*

