



**Bloomington/Monroe County
Human Rights Commission**

**July 21, 2025 Meeting Minutes
Hooker Conference Room, City Hall
5:00 p.m.**

The Bloomington/Monroe County Human Rights Commission met at 5:00 p.m. on Monday, July 21, 2025, in the Hooker Conference Room of Showers City Hall.

Commissioners Attending: Sharon Baker, Katie Bensberg, Stephen Coover (online via Zoom), Amy Jackson, Ryne Shadday, Emma Williams, Lilliana Young.

Staff Attending: BMCHRC Liaison Michael Shermis, BMCHRC Assistant Annabelle Vosmeier.

Public Attending: Sarah Owen, Exodus Refugee Services; Juan Constantino and Dara Marquez, La Casa de Amistad (online via Zoom); Julie Roberts, Monroe County History Center.

Call to Order

1. Shadday brought the BMCHRC to order at 5:02 PM and presented the Land and Labor Acknowledgment.

Approval of Minutes of June 16, 2025 Meeting

1. Jackson moved to approve the minutes from June 16, 2025. Baker seconded. Passed unanimously by roll call vote, 6-0, Coover abstaining.

Report from Staff

1. **Fourth of July Parade:** Shadday shared that the parade went well with good turnout along the route. All the candy was given away by the time the parade reached 7th Street the second time; more candy will be planned for next year.
2. **Fiesta del Otoño Tabling Opportunity:** Shermis presented a tabling opportunity at Fiesta del Otoño on Saturday, September 20, from 12 pm to 4 pm at Switchyard Park. Shadday and Baker volunteered with others expressing interest.

Reports from Commissioners

1. **Young** reported on the Good Trouble Lives On March on July 19th. There was a good turnout, with good energy and no counter protestors. Young was interviewed by Indiana Public Media.
2. **Young** also reported that Bloomington's Safe Haven for Gender Affirming Care resolution is being copied by several other cities: West Lafayette just passed their resolution; Evansville is working on one; other efforts are underway in Kokomo and Muncie. Representatives have called Shermis for information.
3. **Williams** spoke with a county councilwoman about what was reported to her by inmates at the Monroe County Jail, described in previous months' minutes.
4. **Baker** shared that the SoHo Nail Salon on Pete Ellis Drive had refused last year to give

her a pedicure because she is an amputee. However, she just had a good experience at Nails and Spa on College Mall Road.

Open Cases

1. Jackson's disability discrimination in employment case reached a settlement agreement which was signed by the commission during the meeting.
2. Jackson's racial discrimination in housing case has had an intake interview; currently awaiting the respondent's response.
3. Williams's racial discrimination in housing case has had a second interview with complainants following the respondent's position statement.
4. Baker's sex discrimination in housing case is wrapping up as their lawyer debates final wording on a settlement.
5. Young's racial discrimination in employment case has had the initial intake interview; currently awaiting the respondent's response.
6. Bensberg's racial discrimination in employment case has had the initial intake interview; currently awaiting the respondent's response.
 - a. Shermis noted that Young's and Bensberg's cases are similar situations in the same field of employment, although not the same employer.
7. Shadday's disability discrimination in employment case is currently on hold while the complainant withdraws. They filed simultaneously with the BMCHRC and the EEOC due to the loss of our worksharing agreement; however, the EEOC assigned the case to the ICRC and the BMCHRC cannot duplicate an investigation with a state agency.

Assignment of New Cases

1. Shermis described two potential cases. One is currently in the court system; the complainant needs to close the discrimination allegations in court before they can file with us. A second case, gender identity in housing, had an intake interview today. Shermis noted that multiple cases this month have reached full affidavit drafts before dissolving when the complainant stops pursuing the case.

Guest Presentation: Sarah Owen, Community Engagement Coordinator for Exodus Refugee Services

1. Owen presented an informational presentation on Exodus's services and the context of refugee resettlement. She emphasized that refugees are "fleeing for their lives, not for a better life," that they spend many years in refugee camps and other difficult situations before reaching the U.S., and that only a very few are resettled. She described Exodus's services but stated that everything but their ongoing case management services has come to a halt following the January 2025 executive order suspending all refugee resettlement efforts in the U.S.

Unfinished Business

1. **Municipal ID program:** Juan Constantino and Dara Marquez from La Casa de Amistad, South Bend, were invited to present information and answer questions about their municipal ID program.
 - a. La Casa de Amistad is a community and youth center which serves as a regional hub in northern Indiana serving the Latino, Hispanic, and immigrant

communities. It provides social services, an immigration legal clinic, and youth and adult programs.

- b. One such program, which has been ongoing since 2017, is their City ID program. It was initiated as an alternative way to serve immigrant families, primarily undocumented persons, who might not be able to access other IDs. It began as a program sponsored by a local church but was supported by city government under Mayor Pete Buttigieg. It was decided that the program would be managed by an external nonprofit, rather than city government, for the protection of the data. However, it is widely accepted by city government and city officials have promoted it.
- c. In 2017, it had an overwhelmingly positive response, issuing 500 cards in the first three months. They bought their own printer and expanded the program to Goshen, Elkhart, and Plymouth. They have printed thousands of cards.
- d. **Question and Answer Session:** Constantino and Marquez answered questions from Commissioners.
 - i. Data is not stored or retained by La Casa de Amistad for the safety and privacy of those receiving cards. Once a card is printed, all data is deleted from their system. They do keep some anonymized/general demographic data about how many cards are issued.
 - ii. They do not include a gender marker on the card. They offer some amount of flexibility on what name is shown on the card if an applicant can show an official document with that name.
 - iii. The program is promoted by word of mouth in the community and through their bilingual radio station. It is described as a way of showing pride in the community, with local businesses offering discounts and public officials getting cards to promote the program. It also serves as a library card at the South Bend library and can be a form of ID at several local banks.
 - iv. La Casa de Amistad holds mobile ID days at the LGBTQ+ center, on campus, at assisted living facilities, and at expungement clinics.
 - v. Funding: They received a \$10,000 grant to start the program and buy the equipment and printer. There is a \$25 fee per card but each card only costs \$5-\$10 including staff time. Once the initial costs are covered, the program can pay for itself, so they haven't applied for direct grants. Individuals sponsor ID cards for those who cannot afford them.
 - vi. They shared the template for the program with Fort Wayne, specifically through Catholic Charities. That program invested in two printers, but Constantino and Marquez did not know whether it had gotten off the ground successfully.
 - vii. Constantino and Marquez suggested leaning on the community to identify a trusted partner where the community feels welcome. In four cities, there were four unique locations identified by the community, including a church and a school. Don't just assume that a certain location will work. What does the community think? Where do they feel comfortable going?
- e. **Next Steps:** Commissioners agreed that the next step would be to identify a nonprofit partner that might be interested in taking this project on and that could

be a successful fit. Jackson and Young will work together to connect with nonprofit contacts. Constantino and Marquez agreed to share information and to stay in contact, potentially meeting with a promising partner identified by Jackson and Young.

New Business

1. **None.**

Public Input

2. Julie Roberts, Monroe County History Center Educator, described the History Center's planned outreach at PrideFest on August 23, including free guided tours of the Ordinance 75-67 exhibit and a partnership with the Monroe County Public Library to browse LGBTQ+ books. Commissioners suggested offering History Center flyers about the activities on other tables, including the BMCHRC table.

Adjournment: Chair Shadday adjourned the meeting at 6:44 p.m.