



**Bloomington/Monroe County  
Human Rights Commission**

**August 18, 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, August 18, 2025, in the Hooker Conference Room of Showers City Hall.

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

**Staff Attending:** BMCHRC Liaison Michael Shermis, BMCHRC Assistant Annabelle Vosmeier, Assistant City Attorney Taylor Brown.

**Public Attending:** Sheriff Ruben Martí, Jail Commander Kyle Gibbons.

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**Call to Order**

1. Shadday brought the BMCHRC to order at 5:01 PM and presented the Land and Labor Acknowledgment.

**Guest Presentation: Sheriff Ruben Martí, Jail Commander Kyle Gibbons**

1. Martí and Gibbons gave an informational presentation on the Monroe County Jail entitled "From Compliance to Commitment."
2. Martí began by speaking about his life and his inspiration to change the culture of law enforcement. As a young person, he was often stopped by police while walking home. Because police did not treat him or his family fairly or well, he had no thought of being in law enforcement. When he did pursue it as a career, his mother reminded him to treat others as he would be treated and to treat everyone equally and fairly. He became a captain in the Indiana State Police and trained every trooper in Indiana how to create bridges between communities and how to treat those who did not look like them. He was inspired by John Lewis, who faced incredible negativity but did not treat others with that same negativity. When Martí became sheriff in Bloomington, he knew that he had to change the culture, build trust between people of color and the police, and surround himself with people who could make that happen.
3. Martí and Gibbons expressed that the goal of the jail is to treat everyone equally, protect them, and uphold their rights. They see people at their very worst. Therefore, they added a mural so the first word people entering see is "hope" and began focusing on how to prevent people from coming back through discharge planning, clinical social workers, medical attention, etc.
4. From the first day, their team cleaned the space and improved the environment. They made immediate changes to make the jail more humane.
  - a. People are no longer lying on a bare concrete floor or being locked away for 23 hours out of the day.

- b. In most jails, everything is bought from commissary. Here, undergarments, socks, and shirts are provided for free.
  - c. Women's jumpsuits were changed to a two-piece outfit for greater comfort and dignity. Free menstrual products are available at any time.
  - d. Items like a working clock, TV, and microwave were added. The space was greatly cleaned and brightened and murals were painted.
  - e. Through treating people humanely and changing the environment, the use of force in the jail has dropped by 80%.
- 5. Marté, Gibbons, and their team also focus on programming, community, and listening to the perspectives of inmates.
  - a. A poetry group comes into the facility to lead a poetry program; inmates can share their writing.
  - b. Activities for women had previously been limited. They asked what women wanted to do and started a gardening program.
  - c. They focus on eating food together and hearing perspectives. They have events where Gibbons grills for inmates and staff members. Neither inmates nor staff can take a plate away; to get a plate, you have to participate and sit outside at the event.
  - d. On Thanksgiving, inmates called family members for recipes and cooked together.
  - e. There are movie and pizza nights.
- 6. Marté and Gibbons stated that they provide constant training, attempting to change the culture and work outside the norms for law enforcement.
- 7. **Questions/Answers**
  - a. Commissioners participated in a Q&A with Marté and Gibbons following the presentation.
  - b. Marté and Gibbons closed by asking commissioners to share anything negative they hear so that issues can be addressed. Commissioners thanked them for the presentation.

### **Approval of Minutes of July 21, 2025 Meeting**

- 1. Young moved to approve the minutes from July 21, 2025. Williams seconded. Passed unanimously by roll call vote, 7-0.

### **Report from Staff**

- 1. **Pridefest:** Pridefest is this Saturday, August 23. The BMCHRC table will be located on Kirkwood near the library. Commissioners had signed up over email for tabling shifts.

### **Reports from Commissioners**

- 1. **Williams** had previously suggested working with If When How, a reproductive justice organization at the law school, and commissioners had been in favor. She could begin organizing that partnership this school year. Since Bensberg had been involved with that organization in the past, Williams invited Bensberg to collaborate, and she agreed. Brown reminded them that any flyers or similar material on this kind of topic would needed to be reviewed by the whole Commission and likely Legal.
- 2. **Coover and Baker** tabled at the ADA anniversary celebration on August 2 and reported

that it had gone well.

### **Open Cases**

1. Commissioner Young's racial discrimination in employment case: The respondent interview will occur Wednesday morning.
2. Commissioner Williams's racial discrimination in housing: The complainants had a deadline to provide some action items today but have only provided one item. Shermis will contact them tomorrow.
3. Commissioner Bensberg's racial discrimination in employment: The respondent was very forthcoming and provided a reasonable explanation with significant evidence. The NPC finding letter is being developed.
4. Commissioner Baker's sex discrimination in housing case: The consent decree has been signed.
5. Commissioner Jackson's disability discrimination in employment case: This case is closed and the settlement check has been delivered to the complainant.
6. Commissioner Jackson's race discrimination in housing case: The respondent sent substantive information, including additional evidence we did not request that raised more questions. A complainant follow-up conversation will occur tomorrow and the investigation may move to interviews.
7. Commissioner Coover's gender identity/disability discrimination in housing case: The initial complainant interview will occur on Wednesday.
8. Commissioner Shadday's disability discrimination in employment case: This case was duplicated with the ICRC and is finally officially closed.

### **Assignment of New Cases**

1. Although staff continues to receive regular calls, there are no pending potential cases to be assigned. Coover received the most recent case; Shadday will receive the next.

### **Unfinished Business**

1. **Municipal ID program:** Jackson and Young are researching a potential partner and hosting site. A willing and interesting partner would be a meaningful part of a proposal to the City. They have contacted several churches and other nonprofits. Jackson spoke to Stone Belt Arc, which could be a natural and interesting partner that already has a space, staff, and resources. Shermis shared that New Orleans has adopted a municipal ID program and stated that a partner would make the proposal a more serious consideration to City government.

### **New Business**

1. None.

### **Public Input**

2. None.

**Adjournment:** Chair Shadday adjourned the meeting at 6:12 p.m.