



May 18, 2026 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, May 18, 2026, in the Hooker Conference Room of Showers City Hall.

Commissioners Attending: Sharon Baker, Kathleen Bensberg, Lauren Henderson, Emma Williams (online via Zoom), Lilliana Young.

Staff Attending: BMCHRC Liaison Michael Shermis, BMCHRC Assistant Annabelle Vosmeier, Senior Assistant City Attorney Anna Holmes, After Hours Ambassador Program Manager Charles Culp, City Homelessness Response Coordinator Brian Giffen, Bloomington Volunteer Network Coordinator Aubrey Seader.

Public Attending: None.

Call to Order

1. Shermis brought the meeting to order at 5:02 PM. Chair Williams attended via Zoom and was unable to use her camera; therefore, she could not lead the meeting or vote. Vice Chair Jackson and Secretary Coover were absent with notice. With Holmes's legal confirmation, Shermis directed Commissioners to select and vote on an acting chair to lead the meeting. Young nominated herself. Passed unanimously, 4-0.

Approval of Minutes of April 20, 2026 Meeting

1. Baker moved to approve the minutes from April 20, 2026. Bensberg seconded. Passed unanimously, 4-0.

Report from Staff

1. **Unsheltered Homelessness Law (Charles Culp, Brian Giffens).** Culp and Giffens presented on the new state law criminalizing sleeping outdoors, which will be enrolled on July 1, and Bloomington's response. The BPD are required to enforce the law, but there are not enough beds available to shelter everyone, so the City is exploring options to find more resources. They are communicating with people about the law, especially those in long-term encampments, whom the law is most focused on.
2. **Be the Change Challenge (Aubrey Seader).** Seader presented on the Bloomington Volunteer Network and the citywide challenge to log 100,000 volunteer hours in 2026. She explained how to sign up for an account and log hours, including hours that commissioners volunteer for the BMCHRC.

3. **Human Rights Award:** The BMCHRC received two applications, one for an individual (Mel Davis) and one for an organization (Mother Hubbard's Cupboard). Baker moved to present the Human Rights Award to both candidates. Bensberg seconded. Passed unanimously, 4-0. Young moved to approve \$250 to purchase the two awards. Henderson seconded. Passed unanimously, 4-0.
4. **Fourth of July Parade:** Commissioners decided not to participate in the Fourth of July parade this year.

Reports from Commissioners

1. **Baker** taught a four-week class at First United Methodist Church on the book *My Body Is Not A Prayer Request*, which discusses access and disability. This has led to an accessibility audit of the church. Baker will be meeting with church trustees and presenting a list of suggested improvements.
2. **Henderson** introduced herself. She is a second-year student at the Maurer School of Law and previously worked as a case manager at Shalom, where she still volunteers. She may work this summer on a project proposed by Tatiana Wheeler, the director of Heading Home, on a new pilot program for 12-14 month supportive housing.
3. **Bensberg's** friend, who works in reproductive justice, invited her to participate in a program developing an imaginative play space and loss support group. Tandem and an IU professor developing play spaces in underserved communities are also involved in the project.
4. **Young** created an LGBTQ+ committee as part of her work as a member of the Bloomington Democratic Socialists of America.
5. **Baker** shared on Jackson's behalf that The Front Door is currently reaching out for volunteers and support.

Open Cases

1. Jackson's race discrimination in public accommodations: The respondent's lawyer requested an extension, which was granted until May 26.
2. Coover's disability discrimination in public accommodations: The affidavit was sent to the respondent last week.

Assignment of New Cases

1. Shermis discussed two cases. One is a complex race discrimination in public accommodations case; the complainant is focusing on working with their lawyer. Another is a sexual orientation discrimination in housing allegation, which is part of a larger landlord-tenant issue that went to court. Moving forward with an affidavit.

Unfinished Business

1. None.

New Business

1. None.

Public Input

1. None.

Adjournment

1. Acting Chair Young adjourned the meeting at 6:07 p.m.