



**Bloomington/Monroe County
Human Rights Commission**

**January 21, 2025 Meeting Minutes
Hooker Conference Room, City Hall
5:30 p.m.**

The Bloomington/Monroe County Human Rights Commission met at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, January 21, 2025, in the Allison Conference Room of Showers City Hall.

Commissioners Attending: Sharon Baker, Stephen Coover, Autumn Crisovan, Amy Jackson, Ryne Shadday, Emma Williams, Lilliana Young.

Staff Attending: BMCHRC Director Michael Shermis, BMCHRC Assistant Annabelle Vosmeier, Assistant City Attorney Enedina Kassamanian.

Public Attending: Hannah Holtz, Adrian Thomas, Stacey Ross, Cole Ross.

Call to Order: Chair Shadday called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m. and presented the Land and Labor Acknowledgment.

Approval of Minutes of December 16, 2024 Meeting

1. Coover moved to approve the minutes from December 16, 2024. Jackson seconded. Passed unanimously, 5-0-1 (Williams abstaining, Young absent).

Report from Staff

1. **Commissioner Appointments:** Commissioner Baker has been appointed to serve until January 2027. Commissioner Williams will come up for reappointment at the City Council meeting this week to serve until January 2027.
2. **Quarterly Report:** Coover proposed an amendment to “Networking/Education”: his attendance at the NPA meeting had been overlooked. Jackson moved to approve the quarterly report with the amendment. Crisovan seconded. Passed unanimously, 6-0 (Young absent).
3. **Annual Report:** The Commission reviewed changes to the draft that had been suggested over email. Jackson suggested adding a graphic to the section discussing the MEI, which was accepted.

Jackson strongly proposed censoring the use of the N slur in the hate incident report, which is included in the annual report, by adding an asterisk or other mark. This would make the report more sensitive while still representing the incident accurately. The Commission discussed how to present the incident and the slur in the report. Director Shermis had spoken to CFRD Director and former Safe and Civil City Director Shatoyia Moss, who stated that it should be left as is because readers should be made uncomfortable by hate. Shadday referred to former BHRC director Barbara McKinney’s statements that hate incident reports should include any hateful language to represent incidents accurately. Kassamanian proposed that the Commission take a vote on the use in the annual report.

Williams: The Black community has many different opinions on the word, and therefore the Commission should err on the side of causing less potential emotional harm by censoring it. Baker: Sees both sides of the argument, but leans in favor of an honest portrayal of the incident. Coover: The hate of the incident should not be softened in our reporting. Jackson: Everyone will recognize the word and the hate behind it even if censored; we are not trying to shock readers. The BMCHRC should model an inclusive, loving, and whole community: including the word does the opposite. Crisovan: Including the word with the goal of making white readers uncomfortable should not be done at the cost of making Black readers uncomfortable; including it makes the report less welcoming. Williams: Holding white readers accountable should not be at the cost of the Black community's emotional wellbeing. Young: Closest approximation I am familiar with is the T slur, which does not feel shocking to the transgender community because we hear it so often. Leave the word in so as to be accurate to the incident. Williams: It is still accurate if the word is censored; it is not our place as white people to decide to leave it in.

Jackson moved to amend the annual report and hate incident report to alter the spelling on the N word in order to avoid spelling it out entirely and to add a parenthetical statement for clarification. Crisovan seconded. 3-0-4, failed due to lack of majority. Jackson, Crisovan, Williams in favor; Baker, Coover, Young, Shadday abstained.

Commission needs to vote on the annual report after CFRD Director Moss's approval. Director Moss had proposed to have it presented before City Council in early February, but this will not be possible without a special session to vote on it. Kassamanian recommended requesting that City Council table the vote on it.

Reports from Commissioners

1. None.

Open Cases

1. Crisovan's case: Racial discrimination in housing. Defendant has responded and we have another meeting set up for the complainant soon.
2. Jackson's case: Racial discrimination in employment. The respondent has provided additional clarification. Meeting tomorrow morning with complainant and potentially a witness; hoping to make decision on the merit of the case after that meeting.
3. Baker's case: Disability discrimination in housing. The affidavit has been sent to the respondent following an initial interview, with a response due back at the end of the month.
4. Young's case: Disability discrimination in housing. The affidavit was signed last week, with an initial interview with the complainant scheduled for later this week.
5. Shadday's case: National origin discrimination in housing. Had to find probable cause when the respondent did not respond to opportunities for settlement. The respondent has been sent options, including the possibility of a conciliation hearing.

Assignment of New Cases

1. The next potential case would be assigned to Commissioner Williams. It is still possible that the issue may be resolved behind the scenes.

2. Another potential case seems to have been resolved. The complainant had not yet received requested disability accommodations from a program. They were being asked to sign an agreement where, if they were unable to take advantage of the program at this time because of the lack of accommodations, they would lose the opportunity to participate at all. However, the respondent seemed to be working with the individual to provide the accommodations. Director Shermis emailed the respondent about changing the wording of the document to reflect that they would continue to attempt to accommodate the individual and allow them to participate at a later time if accommodations were not currently possible. The respondent agreed to revise the document.

Unfinished Business

1. **Safe Haven for Transgender Life Proposal:** Young proposed a draft resolution last month. Kassamanian continuing to review. Discussion to follow next month. Jackson mentioned yesterday's executive order (14166, requiring the federal government to stop recognizing gender identities beyond a narrow definition of biological sex).
2. **Art/Essay Contest:** The commission selected the theme "How does diversity make our community stronger?" for the 2025 art/essay contest, noting that the theme would be especially relevant given recent attacks on DEI initiatives. Baker and Young volunteered to judge the essay contest, and Coover and Jackson volunteered to judge the art contest.

New Business

1. None.

Public Input

1. Adrian Thomas presented allegations of racial discrimination in housing.
2. Stacey and Cole Ross presented several issues relating to housing.
3. Members of the public were reminded that discussing potential discrimination cases in front of the Commission would break confidentiality guidelines and were invited to fill out an intake form with any discrimination allegations.

Adjournment: Chair Shadday adjourned the meeting at 6:37 p.m.