



Human Relations Advisory Council (HRAC)
County of Lehigh

MEETING MINUTES
March 6, 2023

The meeting of the HRAC was held at 12:00 p.m. by Zoom video conference. A recording of this meeting is available at <https://www.lehighcounty.org/Departments/Community-Economic-Development/Human-Relations-Advisory-Council>.

ATTENDING

Angela Baio (AB), Carmen Bell (CB), Liz Bradbury (LB), Commissioner Zach Cole-Borgi (ZCB), Guillermo Lopez Jr. (CHAIR), Luis A. Perez Jr. (LP), and Paschall Simpson (PS).

Staff: Frank D. Kane (FK), Cyndi King (CK)

Absent: Maryanell Agosto (MA), Tony Branco (TB), Yorman De La Rosa (YDLR), Nagi Latefa (NL)

Guest: Attorney Catharine Roseberry (CR), Assistant Lehigh County Solicitor; Jeikenelys Lopez (JL), Special Assistant to Allentown's Mayor

CHAIR called the meeting to order.

Roll call. Quorum obtained. Meeting is being recorded. Public will have access to that recording on the department's website (see opening paragraph above).

All previous HRAC meeting minutes will be voted upon. LB moved to approve the minutes as read; LP seconded; with no questions received and upon unanimous voice approval, the minutes of the previous HRAC meetings were approved.

AGENDA ITEMS

CR discussed the progress of the proposed Human Relations ordinance. CR commented that the ordinance is extensive and may require more than one or two group discussions on various items. First item for clarification from the Advisory Committee is about some of the definitions and scope of the ordinance. To begin the focus of her legal review, CR made a spreadsheet of comparisons of other ordinances which are in place around the state. CR began today's

discussion by going through the definitions, which is where she says the main substance of the ordinance is – in defining the people who are protected. Beginning alphabetically, the discussion ensued on “Age.” The first distinction between the proposed ordinance and the other laws is that Lehigh County’s proposed ordinance lists above “18” as the age that discrimination protection would apply whereas other jurisdictions use “40.” Discussion ensued.

JL addressed how the City of Allentown handles complaints from the public. Complaints can be made in three ways: by phone, by email, or by a “Contact Us” link on the city’s website. A log of all complaints is kept for historical reference. CB asked how complaints are reported or forwarded to the state. JL responded that housing complaints are forwarded to Allentown’s DCED. LB asked if the city recommends that people file a complaint with the state for Human Relations Commission issues. JL was unsure of the answer because the city is currently recruiting to replenish their Human Relations Commission.

HRAC established its goal to comply with the Home Rule Charter and produce a written report listing its members and summarizing its goals, activities, and accomplishments to be presented in May.

CB asked for clarification on the potential impacts by the proposed ordinance to organizations, companies, or businesses on items based upon the proposed ordinance which are outside of the norms of similar existing ordinances. In what ways would this ordinance stand apart and who else could be impacted by the language of the proposed ordinance? CR offered to provide the spreadsheet she created to the committee. LB provided a similar comparison review in a document she sent to the committee last year. CR and LB decided to meet for further discussions on the proposed ordinance’s definitions.

ZCB assured the HRAC of his support and cooperation.

JL suggested that a representative from Allentown’s Human Relations Commission attend the HRAC meetings once the city’s commission is fully staffed.

No HRAC announcements.

Motion to adjourn by FK ; seconded by CB. Unanimous voice approval. Meeting adjourned at 1:03 p.m..

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia L. King