



LEHIGH COUNTY HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION  
(LCHRC)  
MEETING MINUTES  
May 13, 2025

The meeting of the LCHRC was held at 6:00 p.m. by Zoom video conference. A recording of this meeting is available at <https://www.lehighcounty.org/Departments/Community-Economic-Development/Human-Relations-Commission>.

**ATTENDING**

Joanna Armstrong (JA), Angela Baio (AB), Amy Beck (AmB), Liz Bradbury (LB), Tony Branco (TB), Andrew Gildner (AG), Guillermo Lopez Jr. (GL), Joyce Moore (JM), Luis A. Perez Jr. (LP), Tony Swartz (TS), and Carmen Bell (CB) ex-officio non-voting advisor

County Staff: Catherine Roseberry (CR) (absent), Assistant Solicitor, Frank Kane (FK) (absent), Cyndi King (staff) (absent)

Public: Erlinda Aguiar

**ABSENT** – Michael Blicher Jr. (MB), Christopher Raad (CR), Pas Simpson (PS)

**AGENDA ITEMS**

Call to order at 6:02 p.m. by LB.

Roll call by LB.

LB reminded the Commissioners they must turn on their cameras when there is a vote. Quorum is present.

LB called for review and approval of minutes from April 8, 2025 meeting. Motion to approve the minutes by JM, seconded by JA. Unanimous voice approval of the minutes.

LB noted that there were 430 hits to the LCHRC website page in April.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **Logo Update**

On behalf of the Board, LB extended gratitude and appreciation to CB, United Way, and CB's staff person, Victoria Cyr, for handling this IT information dissemination project of the RFP for LCHRC Logo Design so efficiently and professionally. A concise, hi-tech email was sent to approximately 190-organizations. Deadline for logo design submissions is June 6, 2025. If a huge number of submissions are received, the Logo Committee can winnow down to the best ones and then the Board can vote on them. Or, if only a few are received, the Board might discuss them at the June 10 meeting. If no submissions are received, the RFP will be sent out again at the beginning of the school year.

### **Training Update**

Training the Allentown Human Relations Commission (AHRC) on complaint investigations is complete. Five Allentown Commissioners attended that training. The training went well and LB feels they are prepared to handle complaints. JM and LP were also there. Allentown City Council is moving rapidly to update the current Allentown anti-discrimination ordinance with the full language of the LCHRC Law. LB has been working directly with City Council and Dr. Swan (AHRC Chairperson) for clarification because the city ordinance is very outdated and everyone wants it updated to the language contained in the LCHRC's Ordinance. The updated, rewritten AHRC ordinance was introduced last Wednesday and is now in committee. JM asked LB to keep the Board informed as to when it will be voted upon so that Board members might attend. LB noted that every member of Allentown City Council has signed on as a co-sponsor.

LB will train attorneys at North Penn Legal Services on June 4.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Update on Complaints**

Based on discussions LB had with CR, the County has had full jurisdiction over all discrimination complaints that happened in all areas of Lehigh County since June 2024 providing that area did not have its own Human Relations Commission. It would take 15-months after the signing of the Ordinance in February 2024 for the County to have jurisdiction over the parts of the County that DO have Human Relations Commissions which are Allentown and part of Bethlehem. If either of those cities wanted to disallow Lehigh County from

accepting complaints of discrimination because Allentown's and Bethlehem's commissions would cover their own local complaints then those city councils would have to introduce and pass an ordinance stating that the County would NOT cover their local complaints because they would handle those complaints themselves. These city councils would have had to pass these legislations before the end of the 15-months. This 15-month time period ends on May 21, 2025. Neither of these city councils has introduced this kind of legislation. In order for legislation to pass, it takes more than 9-days [which is where we're at today from the actual deadline]. This means that in 9-days, Lehigh County will be able to accept the filing of those complaints that happen in Allentown and that part of Bethlehem and at the same time, each of those Human Relations Commissions lists of protected classes will expand to include the protected classes in LCHRC's ordinance. The County and each of the cities will ALL have full jurisdiction over complaints that may occur in each of the cities' boundaries along with the LCHRC. This means that a complainant could either file with the City of Allentown or the City of Bethlehem or the County and they could also [cross-file] in the city and county. However, if happens that a complainant wants to file in both places, the LCHRC can discuss with the respective commission and choose how to proceed from that point since it is not necessary to file in both the city and county. AB asked whether the cities are obligated to notify the LCHRC that a complaint has been filed. LB does not believe so but noted that the city commissions are obligated to notify the state human relations commission. JM noted her impression that Allentown was updating their ordinance to which LB concurred that they are. TB asked what preventions, if any, are in place to prevent persons from going from one commission to another when they don't receive their desired results. He wondered whether LCHRC needed to add a resolution to the Ordinance that a complainant cannot file with the other. LB did not agree that complainants should not file with the city commissions and also with the county. She added that complainants can also federally file, too. LB noted that complainants are expected to tell LCHRC the truth because not telling the truth taints their whole complaint but if they've filed with the city and are unhappy with that result, LCHRC Commissioners need to understand why. More explanation ensued.

We are now referring to our complaints by number. Complaint 1 was not jurisdictional because it did not take place in Lehigh County. Complaint 2 has been filed; it was revised; and then it was found to be jurisdictional but was later withdrawn by the complainant, without prejudice, to be filed at a later date.

Two new complaints, Complaint 3 and Complaint 4, have been filed. LB informed the Board that she read through a clearly written Complaint 3. LB spoke

to the complainant who had nothing further to add to the complaint other than what was put on the form. LB did a bit of research and forwarded Complaint 3 to LP and JM for their reviews. LB discussed with them if they interpreted the complaint had met the burden of proof of discrimination based on protected class. Together, it was concluded that although what happened to the person was a circumstance of a really bad boss, there was no pervasive circumstance of discrimination based on protected class. Unable to meet the burden of proof, it was not under LCHRC's jurisdiction so the complaint was dismissed as unfounded and not jurisdictional. LB read through Complaint 4 and then spoke to the complainant who could not describe any logical instance of discrimination or how they had actually been aggrieved. The complainant provided dozens of other complaints filed with other organizations, agencies, and government entities that also did not describe any instance of discrimination based on any protected class. LB discussed this case with LP and JM in person and they agreed that the complaint should be dismissed because complainant could not meet the burden of proof. In both complaints, the complainants received a letter and an email explaining their complaint had been dismissed. TB asked how long the complaint files need to be kept. LB will check with CR but LB feels the complaint files should be kept a long time. LB pointed out the LCHRC's timely processing in terms of receiving, reviewing, and deciding jurisdiction of the complaints which have been received in stark contrast to complaints received by the State and the EEOC. While a complainant might not be happy with the outcome, at least they know what is going on and they are not just waiting around until they finally hear that their complaint is not [jurisdictional].

Collingdale Borough (Delaware County) and Lewisburg are seeking help to pass anti-discrimination ordinances.

LB asked for questions or concerns. LP assured the Board that detailed notes are kept on every complaint. Discussion ensued on what types of recordings are allowable in PA and NJ.

## **CLOSING AGENDA ITEMS**

### **Citizens Input (on Non-Agenda items)**

Erlinda spoke about definitions of hate crimes. LB acknowledged that Allentown's current law and Lehigh County's Ordinance do not have very specific definitions of hate crimes. LB noted that hate crimes are "tricky things to deal with" because it is crime as opposed to discrimination. Erlinda recently rejoined the AHRC. Discussion on how the LCHRC ordinance contains "height" and "weight" as protected classes and if Allentown does adopt the County's language,

high school victims of height and weight discrimination will be protected. Discussion on future LCHRC involvement in high schools with the AHRC ensued.

### **LCHRC Announcements**

AHRC's Dr. Swan informed LB about a tri-state coalition of Human Relations Commission members that has been running for about 7 or 8 years. The person who has been running this coalition is moving out-of-state and will be unable to continue it. LB is encouraging people, particularly someone who might be interested in continuing perpetuating meetings of this coalition by just hosting it so members can talk and share, to attend the upcoming June 12 meeting. LB will forward information to the board

### **Motion to Adjourn**

LB called for a motion to adjourn; TB made the motion. LP seconded that motion. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Cynthia L. King