



Human Relations Advisory Council (HRAC)
County of Lehigh

MEETING MINUTES
May 6, 2024

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)(Vice-Chair), Tony Branco (TB), Nagi Latefa (NL), Guillermo Lopez Jr. (CHAIR), Luis A. Perez Jr. (LP).

STAFF: Frank Kane (FK), Cyndi King (CK)

Absent: Maryanell Agosto (MA), Commissioner Zach Cole-Borghetti (ZCB), Paschall Simpson (PS)

Public: No one

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).

CHAIR asked for a motion to approve the 4/1/2024 meeting minutes. LB made the motion; motion seconded by TB. Unanimous voice vote approval of minutes.

OLD BUSINESS

LB reported sixteen applicants have emailed their interest to serve as commissioners on the inaugural Lehigh County Human Relations Commission which belies any concerns that there would not be enough applicants to staff the newly enacted commission. Six members of the HRAC applied. There are significant people representing different parts of the community who have applied. Discussion of specific applicants ensued. LB reflected upon her time serving on Allentown's HRC that the majority of complaints came from the disability community. LB felt that all of the applicants represented a healthy cross-section of diversity. The applications will be forwarded to the County Executive for his review and candidate selection. FK clarified that there are thirteen seats open for the commission. The ad for applicants will remain open until 5/9/24. NL inquired whether there are any criteria used to select commissioners. FK replied the hope is for a diverse group across all the areas where a person might be discriminated against such as age, race, sexual preference, ethnicity, and national origin etc. and if it appears not enough divergent groups are represented or if LB brings it to the administration's attention, other people might also be encouraged to apply. CB requested clarification on the process she would undertake to be considered to fill one of the three available non-voting advisory positions available on the commission. LB clarified that the commission is allowed to choose three advisors who can regularly attend meetings but are non-voting members to advise the commission. LB acknowledged that anyone can attend the meetings and participate or "chime in". LB outlined the steps as follows: the administration chooses the people they want to put forward for consideration as Human Relations commissioners. The chosen applicants are appointed and the Board of Commissioners (BOC) votes to ratify or not. Those ratified candidates would then comprise the commission. Given there are more applicants than positions, it is evident that not everyone who applied will be selected. However, the meetings are open to the public and those people who were not selected would still be welcome to attend the meetings. There is also the possibility those applicants might be appointed as advisors. LB reiterated that it is written into law that commissioners [and advisors] must come to the meetings; if someone misses three meetings in one twelve-month period, they must vacate their seat on the commission. CB wants very much to be connected to the Human Relation Commission because she considers the work of the commission to be an important part of the work she does in the Lehigh Valley. Therefore, CB asked if the commission achieves its 13-

commissioner goal will it choose applicants for its non-voting advisory positions or will it not choose? LB responded that it would not be unreasonable for the commission to make that decision on the first meeting of the commission – to make the vote that CB, who has extensive prior experience and history and who wants to be one of the three advisors, [should be appointed as an advisor] and if not then, certainly on the second meeting. CB made the observation that there is a level of expectation that a non-voting advisor will attend every meeting whereas an interested person of the public would not necessarily have that same level of dedication and commitment; that person might pick and choose which meetings to attend or not attend. LB agreed. CB wanted to make the distinction and to understand the process because she is committed to being a part of it and wanted to clarify the process to be in compliance.

NEW BUSINESS

LB noted that two Philadelphia law firms have publicly noted that this ordinance has passed and are touting that businesses should “immediately” contact them so they may explain what businesses in Lehigh County are going to have to do to ensure they are in compliance with the ordinance. LB noted that the commission itself can do that for businesses.

CLOSING AGENDA ITEMS

CHAIR noted to FK that the HRAC is hoping to soon have the County Executive talk with the group about the time and efforts it took to bring the ordinance to this point.

CHAIR asked for any further business and there being none, went on to accept a motion to adjourn by TB and seconded by LB. After unanimous voice vote, the meeting concluded.

There is one, final HRAC meeting scheduled for June 3 via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia L. King