



LEHIGH COUNTY HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION  
(LCHRC)  
MEETING MINUTES  
January 14, 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), Michael Blicher Jr. (MB), Liz Bradbury (LB), Tony Branco (TB), Andrew Gildner (AG), Guillermo Lopez Jr. (GL), Joyce Moore (JM), Christopher Raad (CR), Pas Simpson (PS), Tony Swartz (TS) and Carmen Bell (CB) ex-officio non-voting advisor

Also in attendance representing Lehigh County: Catherine Roseberry (CR), Assistant Solicitor

County Staff: Absent: Frank Kane (FK) and Cyndi King (CK)

Public: None

**ABSENT** – Luis A. Perez Jr. (LP)

**AGENDA ITEMS**

Call to order at 6:01 p.m. by LB.

Roll call by LB.

Announcement that the meeting is recorded for public record 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 December 10, 2024 meeting. No questions or concerns; motion for approval by TB, seconded by JM. Unanimous voice approval to approve and accept the minutes.

No public present for comment on non-agenda items.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **Complaint Form**

Complaint form and procedures have been completed and finalized and were forwarded to the IT Department (Ticket # 51264). LB hopes those items will be posted to the website by the end of the month knowing there are no guarantees on that timeline because of the volume of work already assigned to that department. Once those items are posted, LB will feel confident and hopes the rest of the Board will be, too, to move ahead and tell people that they can go to the website and file a complaint.

### **Keynote Training**

LB emailed the Board the pdf and the recording which she created (also posted on YouTube) for their review. LB admitted that the recording was a “first-take” to which JM said the recording was “great” but suggested LB consider doing another take to make it shorter.

TS suggested creating a version of the recording which would be ten-minutes or less and which could be specially targeted toward complainants and not organizations. TS raised a concern over the prerequisites for filing a complaint (whether it occurs in Lehigh County, the 180-days to consider, and discrimination based upon specific protected classes) because that information appears almost 17-minutes into the presentation; TS stated it would need to be moved toward the very beginning.

LB envisioned individuals (not organizations) simply going to the website and filing out a complaint form because the steps to file are clearly stated in the procedures immediately following the complaint form. LB discussed the procedures for a complainant to file a complaint.

TB lauded the presentation but asked LB to review slide #7 and discussed “unqualified workers.” LB stated that a “person who is unqualified or who is not doing a job well cannot claim the reason they were fired was because of discrimination. The employer would have to demonstrate that the person was unqualified for their job if the person is making a complaint based on a protected

class.” JM added that she, too, was confused by the “unqualified workers” portion of Slide #7. LB decided to remove that statement from the slide.

Additional discussion ensued.

TB asked if there is a mechanism to get this pdf/presentation to the municipalities in advance of a LCHRC Commissioner visit. LB observed with the main problem with using that approach is that people will want to ask questions [without the convenience of a commissioner being there to answer] so LB prefers to do the presentations in-person before (perhaps) distributing the pdf and presentation to the local governments. TB noted that LB should be certain to let the supervisors and managers know in advance that she plans to do the presentation and not to surprise them at a council meeting.

AB suggested doing three or four Zoom meeting presentations with at least one person from each of the county’s 25 municipalities in attendance who then can go back and share the YouTube link of the presentation with other personnel.

PS and CB offered to accompany LB if she chooses to present in person.

CB offered to use United Way’s Zoom account which can accommodate numerous attendees at the same time.

GL suggested using the newspaper.

AG suggested a presentation at a Congress of Government (COG) meeting since all or most of the managers would be in attendance.

TB suggested inviting legislators to a separate training, perhaps held at the Government Center even before municipalities are invited to a presentation. AmB agreed it would be important to the legislators’ key staff.

AG suggested utilizing the Chamber of Commerce to “get the word out” as to the presentations because it will be vital for businesses to know.

LB stressed again that she does not want to do presentations or any sort of public outreach until the complaint and procedures are posted on the website. In addition to CB and LP, LB asked if anyone else wanted to join the Training Committee to disseminate this information to organizations. JM, AG, and PS volunteered.

### **Logo Committee**

LB screen-shared a Request for Proposal (RFP) for New Graphic Design Logo for the LCHRC written by CR. LB suggested adding to the RFP that this is a volunteer project; there will be no payment made; and the artist will not hold the

copyright for the logo. LB suggested another meeting for this committee. TS asked LB to distribute copies of the RFP to the Board.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

LB asked PS to report on what happened at City Hall: On Friday (1/10), a noose was found on the desk of Latarsha Brown at City Hall. Her name was disclosed by the media which is atypical to have a victim's identity immediately made public. PS stated this disclosure was done with no protection plan in place for Ms. Brown; there are only women and children in her home. He went on to explain that women can [are able to] protect themselves but that they shouldn't have to. PS explained the use for a noose during slave times and periods in history thereafter. He explained the nuance a black person would understand in receiving a noose as an inference of being "strange fruit that hangs from the trees." Receiving a noose is an obvious hate crime even if [it is later determined that] the person who placed the noose on Ms. Brown's desk is another black person. PS noted that Ms. Brown levied other discrimination complaints in the past all of which went unheard and now this incident has become a criminal investigation. Members of the public (someone or some group) have asked that this investigation be reassigned from the Allentown Police Department (APD) to the Federal Bureau of Investigations because a hate crime is a federal crime. Also on Friday (1/10), two APD officers were charged with rape and kidnapping. PS expressed the public sentiment that APD might not have the sensitivity to work on investigating the hate crime against Ms. Brown at this time. PS stressed that when racism occurs, it doesn't just happen to one community; everyone, all communities, are negatively affected. He said, "When you hold down one particular race or gender or any other way [groups of people get] divided, the entire human race is prevented from reaching its optimum [potential]. God blessed us to all be different. If we can accept those differences for the greatness [they are] we can be better." PS will lead the public discussion at the Allentown City Council later this week.

LB asked the Board to let her know when and where there is going to be any type of protest or some type of action with regard to discrimination issues.

GL brought up an incident that happened at Nitchman Middle School where a 6<sup>th</sup> grade instructor decided to have students answer the question "How would you treat a slave etc...?" He went on to say that a similar incident occurred in 2021 in Minnesota and appears to be connected to some "misguided hateful interpretation." Parents saw the assignment, took pictures, and posted it on Facebook. GL understands that the Bethlehem School District is handling this issue with severity.

## **CLOSING AGENDA ITEMS**

**Citizens Input (on Non-Agenda items) - none**

**LCHRC Announcements - None**

**Motion to Adjourn**

LB called for a motion to adjourn; TB made the motion. AG seconded that motion. Unanimous voice approval. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia L. King