



Seattle Human Rights Commission Meeting Minutes

Thursday, May 7, 6:00 p.m.

Hosted online on Zoom and in person at Seattle City Hall, 600 4th Ave, Board and Commissions Room #L280.

Call to Order

- at 6:04 p.m.

Roll Call

- Present: Commissioners Catsambas, Hultgren, Koss, Lewis, Leydon, Monson, Quander, Tibbs, McCullough, and Smith
- Nominees: Queen Adams, David Issak, Zoey Stylianides
- Excused Absent: Commissioners Bailey, Koss, Gonser and Dustin
- Absent: Garcia
- City of Seattle Staff
 - Present: Sebastian Wilson, Meredith Stone, Esther Handy (Mayor's Office), Councilmember Alexis Rinck

Land Acknowledgement

"We are currently occupying the unceded lands of many First Peoples, Coast Salish people, Muckleshoot, Suquamish, Stillaguamish, and Duwamish. We acknowledge and thank local First Nations for their centuries of land stewardship that long predates the arrival of European settlers. We remind you to be aware of the spaces you occupy locally, that these lands were stolen from First People in the name of white settler colonialism and that you seek ways to continue your education and give back to local Indigenous communities." (Duwamish Tribe's website)

"We must acknowledge that much of what we know of this country today, including its culture, economic growth, and development throughout history and across time, has been made possible by the labor of enslaved Africans and their descendants who suffered the horror of the transatlantic trafficking of their people, chattel slavery, and Jim Crow. We are indebted to their labor and their sacrifice, and we must acknowledge the tremors of that violence throughout the generations and the resulting impact that can still be felt and witnessed today." (Dr. Terah "TJ" Stewart)

Public Comment

- I. None.
 - a. Several students attended as observational participants for class assignments

Approval of Meeting Minutes

- I. Discussion arose that the April minutes had not tracked questions posed to Mike Chin during his OCR Investigations presentation. Commissioners requested those questions and answers be reflected in the minutes.
- II. Gwen asked for a wording update under the April minutes public safety item to record it as a motion from Commissioner Garcia rather than attributing language to the Office of the City Attorney.
- III. Approval of the April minutes was postponed; April minutes to be revised with the additional items requested.

New Business

- I. Esther Handy, Executive Operations Manager, Mayor's Office
 - a. Introduced herself and summarized her new role supporting the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) across civil rights organizing efforts including labor standards, immigrant/refugee affairs, community police commission, Race and Social Justice Initiative, ban-the-box work.
 - b. Esther said Mayor Wilson's office had been focusing on immigrant/refugee work, queer/trans stabilization efforts, and partnering with OCR and LGBTQ commissions.
 - c. Esther acknowledged inquiries about the status of OCR's director and noted a pending HR investigation; she could not discuss details but offered to return later in the year when appropriate.
- II. Alexis Rinck (Councilmember, Position 8)
 - a. Introduced herself and thanked the commission for prior collaborations (e.g., documentary screening "Evicted").
 - b. She outlined city-wide priorities for the year: change in committee structures, chairing Human Services, Labor & Economic Development now, federal policy engagement, monitoring HR1/big federal changes, healthcare, homelessness response, transit investments (Seattle Transit Measures) and ORCA Lift funding, comprehensive plan work (land use policy, phases), housing equity & affordability.
 - c. She highlighted pressing homelessness issues: a federal funding cycle with about \$65 million at stake that could house ~4,500 households in King County; coordination with Senator Murray's office was ongoing.

- d. She asked the commission what questions or input they would want from Council/Council office as legislation is developed and requested the commission weigh in formally on legislation when it is ready.
- III. Commission introduced chairs and members of task forces/committees: Appeals Committee Chair: Nicholas, Events Committee Chair: Bryennah; Events Committee reported upcoming events and expectations, Housing Task Force, Human Trafficking Task Force, Criminal Legal System Reform, Policy Review and Communications committees, and five-commission chair coordination.

Committee/Task Force Reports

- I. Executive Committee-
 - a. Chair McCullough – Following discussions with City Legal counsel regarding open public meeting laws we will keep the chat disengaged for our public meetings.
 - b. Treasurer Hultgren – Reported ~\$1,200 available in the general (events) fund and ~\$230 earmarked for Google expenses, leaving approximately \$970 available for events after Google earmark.
 - i. Confirmed funds available for and supported proceeding with the \$150 Pride Flag Raising sponsorship from the general fund; the chair sought confirmation of available funds
- II. Communications
 - i. No report
- III. Appeals - Commissioner Leydon
 - a. Appeals have heard 8 appeals so far this year; May 14 is the next hearing. The Appeals team reported ~85% of this year's hearing slots had been
 - i. filled; open slots included 1 in October 2 in November, and 3 in December.
- IV. Events- Commissioner Quander reported on Human Rights Day Event series:
 - a. Events Committee (Chair Brianna / Christian Wander) announced a community event scheduled this Saturday at the Van Asselt Community Center 2:00–4:00pm (details to be emailed); reminded task forces must hold at least one event per year.
 - b. Suggestion raised that events planned throughout the year could be budgeted to \$1,500 per event for clearer and equal mapping of which funds covered which events. Task forces need clarity on funding sources and event budgets.
 - c. The LGBTQ Commission requested co-sponsorship for its Pride flag-raising event on June 1. Typical sponsorship in the past has ranged \$100–\$200. Events Chair proposed \$150 from the Commission's general fund (to cover food costs).

- i. Motion to co-sponsor the Pride flag raising at \$150 from the Human Rights Commission general fund was moved by Events Chair) and seconded
 - ii. Voice/hand Vote was taken
 - iii. Motion passed
- V. Housing & Unhoused Task Force- Commissioner Hultgren/Lewis on behalf of Bailey shared:
 - a. Housing & Unhoused task force scheduled tentative event for June 30 at Cacao Round Two (partnering with other OCR Commissions and will require volunteers; Google sheet sign-ups to be circulated.
- VI. Human Trafficking Task Force- Commissioner Koss:
 - a. Commissioners reported outreach and coordination with King County XXXX task forces, FIFA anti-trafficking planning (international events like FIFA World Cup), Heal Trafficking (global organization) and BEST Alliance (businesses ending slavery & trafficking).
 - b. Upcoming collaborative activities included tabling and meetings to coordinate local responses and public-health-aligned strategies (Heal Trafficking meeting May 20; meetings with Best Alliance and local organizations around FIFA).

Unfinished Business

- I. Commission Agreements
 - a. Chair McCullough –shared a draft list of standing agreements / behavioral norms for commissioners to improve meeting effectiveness and collaboration.
 - i. Key elements included: showing up prepared, reviewing minutes/agenda/materials in advance, notifying executive committee when unavailable, removing distractions during your remote meeting attendance, listening actively, using "I" statements and lived-experience framing when sharing, asking clarifying questions to understand, being willing to be flexible (two things can be true at that same time), and returning to continue conversations as needed.
 - ii. Gwen asked commissioners to provide suggested edits prior to the next meeting and proposed voting to adopt the list as standing agreements at the next meeting.
- II. Criminal Legal System Reform Task Force Chair
 - a. Commissioner McCullough - At the retreat, the commission had voted to continue the criminal justice reform task force with the understanding that a new Chair was needed; Commissioner Quander should not have to manage both Events and CLSR.

- i. Making co-chairs or redistributing responsibilities was considered.
 - b. Gwen moved to appoint Beverly Smith as the new Criminal Legal System Reform Chair.
 - i. Clarification was discussed on the task force's naming as Criminal Legal System Reform Task Force.
 - ii. Clarified motion was seconded
 - 1. Motion to appoint Commissioner Smith Chair passed by majority vote; motion carried.
- III. Defining Human Rights Campaign
 - a. Commissioner Tibbs - Proposed the HRC consider drafting a local definition of "human rights" for Seattle (how the city chooses to define rights for residents/refugees) and suggested collecting input between now and Human Rights Day with eventual unveiling.
 - b. Commissioners discussed precedent: other cities (San Francisco, Sydney, London) had definitions; the Seattle Human Rights Commission had produced long-form materials in 2021 (e.g., a comprehensive packet) but not a concise local definition for public campaigns.
 - c. Commissioners supported the idea: it was noted as timely because of local/federal policy shifts (e.g., protections for voting, refugees, and political rights) and could help position the city's priorities and link to resource commitments.
 - d. Communications & Policy committees (and cross-commission roundtable) were suggested as logical working groups to draft/coordinate the definition and any public rollout.
 - e. Kyle to lead initial leg work and liaison among committees and task forces, develop proposal for commission vote.
- IV. Outstanding Appeals investigations process questions
 - a. Commissioner Catsambas

Seattle Office for Civil Rights Updates

- I. Sebastian Wilson reported that the five-commission chairs joint meeting was noted to occur next week.
- II. Gwen and others expected to coordinate cross-commission advocacy and policy review work.
- III. The city-wide roundtable (all commissions) had been held recently to align priorities: housing, community outreach and engagement, and policy recommendation/review were central themes.
- IV. Planning for a hybrid outreach & engagement workshop (interactive) for all commissions was announced for end of the month, 6:00–7:30pm (RSVP link to be circulated Monday).

Seattle Human Rights Commission
Regular Meeting
May 7, 2026

- V. A slate of candidate interviews was scheduled: Get Engaged program interview panels May 11 (1–2pm), May 13 (4–5pm), May 14 (9–10am); a full commission candidate interview was scheduled Tuesday next week 3–4pm.
 - a. Several commissioners volunteered to sit on interview panels; staff would forward invites.
 - b. New nominees (Zoe, David) were welcomed; staff noted confirmation processes can be slow (approximately 60 days typical), and new nominees would get access to materials once confirmed.

Adjourned 7:59 p.m.

Motion was made by Secretary and seconded by the Chair to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously.

Next Regular Meeting

June 4, 2026