



One City for All People

Full Commission Meeting – Minutes DRAFT
Monday, December 4, 2023, 4:00pm-5:30pm
Howard Office Building
Sonny West Auditorium
700 2nd Ave. S., Nashville, TN 37210

The mission of the Metro Human Relations Commission is to protect and promote the personal dignity, peace, safety, security, health, and general welfare of all people in Nashville and Davidson County.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Commissioners in attendance: Maryam Abolfazli, Genma Stringer Holmes, Ariel Safdie, Dr. Amy Charlton, Dr. Ben Tran, Dakota Galban, Charles Traugher, Alecia Wynn

Staff in attendance: Davie Tucker, Ashley Bachelder, RJ Robles, Crystal Cockrill

Attorney: Matthew Garth

YouTube recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NercZFEPXfo>

2. CONFIRM QUORUM

Quorum was confirmed and the meeting was called to order at 4:17 pm.

3. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes were approved with one edit for a spelling error.

4. FINANCIAL UPDATE

MHRC had it's prebudget meeting with Finance and is preparing for the budget cycle to begin in March. There are significant savings or changes in our budget in the year to date. A proposed budget will be available in 1-2 months for review by the Executive Committee and full Commission.

5. NEW BUSINESS

- Rules and Policies ad hoc committee creation
Chair Abolfazli proposed the creation of a rules and policies ad hoc committee to review our existing bylaws, policies, and code. The purpose is to identify vagueness in the language about of our policies and procedures to add clarity and detail where needed. Commissioner Burton expressed interest in joining, and staff will ask Commissioner Venick to serve. Commissioners should inform staff if they would like to join the ad hoc committee.
- Public comments policy –
The final public comment policy was given to Commissioners. It will be posted to the MHRC website.

- Executive Director evaluation –
Chair Abolfazli will propose a format and procedure for Director Tucker’s evaluation. A suggestion was made to look at previous Executive Director evaluations, if available.
- Community engagement
 - Human Rights Day Celebration is this Wednesday, December 6 at 5pm
 - Phila Awards: MHRC was a co-sponsor of the Phila Awards last week

6. OLD BUSINESS

- Complaint update: Staff provided an update on the Title VI complaint filed by five individuals in October regarding the allocation of funding by Metro Arts Commission. Activities undertaken by MHRC staff, which are still ongoing, include interviews with Metro Arts staff and Commissioners, review of past meeting recordings and minutes, review of internal and public planning and research documents from Metro Arts, and constructing a timeline of events. The specific allegations of the complaint focus on the decision by the Arts Commission to provide grants in July 2023, and was rescinded and voted upon differently in August 2023. MHRC fact-finding report will focus specifically on this allegation.
- Commissioner Traughber asked if Metro Legal is listed as a respondent on the Title VI complaint. Staff will follow up to confirm.
- Commissioners discussed the disparities study that was commissioned by Metro Arts staff and released in June 2023. There was confusion about what qualifies as a disparities study. Metro Legal rep Matthew Garth stated that Metro uses a specific process and research firm needs to be used to be verified as a Metro disparities study. Metro Arts commissioned a disparities report through a research firm that did not use this process, so it does not meet the criteria to inform policy and procedures within metro. Commissioner Tran asked for detail about what kind of disparity a study is trying to measure. Commissioner Traughber asked for clarity about the purpose of the report, as in, if it had been done through the approved process, what would be different in the process? Staff will get clarity from Metro Legal about these processes.
- Commissioner Traughber stated that funding for Thrive applicants included all Thrive applicants, not only those who are BIPOC. Metro Legal’s advice was that the discussion about BIPOC grantees is what made the vote potentially unconstitutional, and therefore advised the Arts Commission re-vote, even though the decision affected applicants of all races.
- Commissioner Galban asked what information was shared in the Executive Committee meeting that would move Commissioners to change their vote. Director Tucker stated that MHRC is not privy to that meeting. Metro Legal rep Garth explained that a board or commission can meet with their attorney to discuss matters related to ongoing or potential litigation under attorney-client privileges, which makes it exempt from sunshine laws.
- Commissioner Tran stated that factors other than only race were part of decisions about grants.

7. PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Lydia Yousief: Yousief spoke about her experience with Metro Arts which led her to submit a complaint. She described the complaint as an opportunity to advocate for a real commitment to equity.

- Sangeetha Ekambaram: Ekambaran spoke about the July vote by the Metro Arts Commission as a clear example of a stride toward equity and that that a lot of work went into those decisions by Metro Arts and by community members through a community engagement process.

8. ANNOUNCEMENTS

9. ADJOURN

Appeal of Decisions from the Metro Human Relations Commission

If you are not satisfied with a decision of the Metropolitan Human Relations Commission, you may appeal the decision by petitioning for a writ of certiorari with the Davidson County Chancery or Circuit Court. Your appeal must be filed within 60 days of the date of the entry of the Human Relations Commission's decision. We advise that you seek your own independent legal advice to ensure that your appeal is filed in a timely manner and that all procedural requirements have been met.



If any accommodations are needed for individuals with disabilities who wish to be present at the meeting, please contact MHRC at 615-880-3370 or MHRC@nashville.gov. Requests should be made as soon as possible but at least 24 hours prior to the scheduled meeting for the entity to provide such needed aid or service.