

PENNSYLVANIA HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

M I N U T E S

TIME: 3:00 P.M.

Monthly Meeting

Held at

VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

March 23, 2026

Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission
Monthly Meeting
March 23, 2026

COMMISSIONERS:

Joel Bolstein, Esquire, Chair
Dr. Raquel O. Yiengst, Vice Chair - Absent
Mayur Patel, Esquire, Secretary - Absent
Dr. Rad Agrawal - Absent
Michael Hardiman, Esquire
Curtis Jones - Absent
Aleena Sorathia, Esquire - Absent

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Chad Dion Lassiter, MSW

CHIEF COUNSEL

Joseph Green, II, Esquire
Robert Taylor, Esquire, Assistant Chief Counsel

DEPUTY CHIEF COUNSEL

Morgan Williams, Esquire

COMMISSION COUNSEL

Melissa Lovett, Esquire - Absent

STAFF PRESENT:

Amanda Brothman Jumper, Director of Communications
Alana Burman, Director of Policy, Intergovernmental
Affairs and Mediation
Fatim Byrd, Director of Education
Desiree Chang, Deputy Director for Enforcement,
Policy and Compliance
Caroline Griffin, Director of Rural and Civic
Engagement
Adrian Garcia, Deputy Director for Regional
Operations and Housing
Amber Harris, Regional Office Director, Philadelphia
- Absent
Darlene Martin, Esquire, Hearing Examiner
Sheryl Meck, Director, Civil Rights Division
La Dawn Robinson, Regional Office Director,
Pittsburgh

Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission
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STAFF PRESENT (cont.):

Heather Roth, Regional Office Director, Harrisburg
Tamara Shehadeh-Cope, Esquire, Hearing Examiner
Debbie Walters, Administrative Officer

ALSO PRESENT:

Sherwood Goodenough, PHRC Director of Enforcement
Brittany Mellinger, PHRC Director of Fair Housing and
Commercial Property
Warren Bubb, PHRC Director of Human Resources
Megan Hammond, Executive Director, Fair Housing
Partnership of Greater Pittsburgh
Angela McIver, Chief Executive Officer, Fair Housing
Rights Center in Southeastern Pennsylvania
Anne Puluka, Esquire, Staff Attorney, Community
Justice Project
Rachel Wentworth, Executive Director, Housing
Equality Center of Pennsylvania
Rachel Shepherd, Executive Director, Center on Race
and Social Problems, University of Pittsburgh
Ashley Mader
Morris France
Jamie Cameron
Gregory Jones, Sargent's Court Reporting Service,
Inc.

Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission

March 23, 2026

MEETING CALL TO ORDER AND OPENING STATEMENT

Joel Bolstein, Esquire, Chair of the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission, welcomed all to the monthly meeting of the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission. He stated this public meeting was advertised in accordance with the provisions of the Sunshine Act. Prior to the meeting and keeping with the confidentiality requirements of the Sunshine Act, a closed session was held to discuss compliance matters, management updates, and adjudicative case deliberations.

After concluding with the business portion of the meeting, guests will be invited to introduce themselves and any organizations they represent. Guests will have an opportunity briefly to address the Commission. Public comments are welcomed about equal opportunity and Civil Rights issues or problems of discrimination. Any statements expressed during the Public Session by members of the public represent the opinions and beliefs of that speaker alone and not the opinions and beliefs of the Commission.

9 Joel Bolstein, Esquire, Chair, called the
10 meeting to order.

12 [Chair Bolstein reported the CROWN Act (HB439) had
13 been signed into law in Pennsylvania. He noted
14 remedies existed prior through the Pennsylvania Human
15 Relations Act (PHRA), which included hairstyles;
16 however, PHRC needed to make sure the word goes out
17 to everybody that they have remedies under the law.

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1 forward, despite pitfalls and stumbling blocks. He
2 stated there were people who foundationally and
3 fundamentally did not believe African American women
4 and women of color were discriminated in the
5 workplace and elsewhere due to their hair. He noted
6 the historical moment meant young people would now be
7 able to move forward knowing they could be who they
8 are with their natural hair.

9 Executive Director Lassiter described recent
10 events including a round-table discussion led by
11 Regional Director Amber Harris and a ceremony with
12 Governor Shapiro. He shared PHRC has had a number of
13 people, particularly members of the leadership of the
14 State Assembly, requesting PHRC conduct webinars and
15 trainings pertaining to the CROWN Act and how people
16 are protected.

17 Executive Director Lassiter reported PHRC had
18 received a compliment allowing for the hiring of ten
19 new people. Each of the three regional offices have
20 hired or will be hiring three new investigators.]

21 ***

22 MANAGEMENT REPORTS - Executive Director

23 [Executive Director Lassiter shared he recently
24 returned from five days at the Faith and Politics
25 Institute Pilgrimage in Charleston, South Carolina,

1 which looked at "One Destiny, One America." The
2 pilgrimage was co-chaired by Senator Tim Scott and
3 Congressman Jim Clyburn. He added others on the trip
4 included Senator Chris Coons, Congresswoman Madeleine
5 Dean, and various civil rights leaders. He explained
6 the Faith and Politics Institute comes of the work of
7 John Lewis and brings together people from different
8 sides and ideological spaces, Democrats, and
9 Republicans under the guise of faith, not religion.
10 He noted there was a request for PHRC and Governor
11 Shapiro to host the next pilgrimage in Philadelphia.

12 Executive Director Lassiter shared, during the
13 trip, he was able to visit two houses of faith, the
14 second oldest Jewish synagogue in America and the
15 Church of Mother Emanuel where Dylann Roof killed
16 nine African Americans in 2015. He led a moment of
17 silence at the Church to help reclaim the space. In
18 addition, after the church service, a conversation
19 was held on what faith, forgiveness, and
20 reconciliation resembles.

21 Executive Director reported the compliment at
22 present time was 92 of 102 people. He added the new
23 Director of HR recently started, and a conditional
24 offer has been made to a person in the legal
25 division. He met with Deputy Director Garcia and

1 Office of Human Resources, and there had been a name
2 change for HRRs who will now be Civil Rights
3 Investigators.

4 Executive Director Lassiter shared, on March 24,
5 2026, the Rural and Civic Engagement Division would
6 be rolled out in the Capitol Rotunda. He noted the
7 division is the genesis of traveling to 67 counties
8 over two years and talking to people about PHRC. The
9 discussion culminated in the need to have a Director
10 of Rural and Civic engagement to connect the needs of
11 rural populations in the spaces of disability,
12 commercial property, public accommodations,
13 education, employment, and housing with their State
14 Representatives and Senators.

15 Executive Director Lassiter concluded his report
16 with comments on the urgency of reaching a
17 compliment. He noted candidates will not always have
18 everything PHRC wants; however, if they have
19 something comparable to what PHRC needs, then PHRC
20 can move forward with them. He added PHRC has a
21 responsibility to mentor people and coach them.]

22 ***

23 MANAGEMENT REPORTS - Chief Counsel,
24 [Joseph Green, II, Esquire, Chief Counsel,
25 highlighted Dana Prince, Esquire, who was involved in

1 securing the CROWN Act legislation. She assisted in
2 writing some of the guidance and language of the
3 regulations that were passed by the Governor.

4 Mr. Green noted his office has ten cases in
5 Commonwealth Court, two of which are of original
6 jurisdiction, three in enforcement, and five in
7 appeal.]

8 ***

9 MANAGEMENT REPORTS - Hearing Examiners

10 [Tamara Shehadeh-Cope, Esquire, Hearing Examiner, and
11 Darlene Martin, Esquire, Hearing Examiner, introduced
12 themselves. Hearing Examiner Shehadeh-Cope announced
13 an upcoming public hearing on March 25, 2026, in
14 Berks County. She noted public hearings are open to
15 members of the public and details for the hearing
16 could be found on the PHRC website under Legal
17 Resources. She added there was also information on
18 the website for a public hearing scheduled for June
19 2026 with the location and time to be determined. In
20 addition to hearing information, resources for
21 attorneys and self-represented parties can be found
22 on the website.]

23 ***

24 MANAGEMENT REPORTS - Pittsburgh Regional Office

25 [La Dawn Robinson, Regional Office Director,

1 Pittsburgh, reported on vacancies for investigators
2 and a clerical assistant. She shared a No Hate in
3 Our State event was scheduled for March 24, 2026, at
4 the Jewish Community Center in Pittsburgh regarding
5 hate speech that was on the police radio. Her office
6 also recently had workplace safety training led by
7 Corporal Allen from the Pennsylvania State Police.
8 The training was in response to the increased threats
9 and intimidation directed toward investigators.

10 Regional Director Robinson shared some of the
11 supervisors and investigators attended a showing at
12 La Roche University of "Cure for Hate: Bearing
13 Witness." The film is about a former skinhead and
14 Holocaust denier, Tony McAleer, who traveled to
15 Auschwitz and became repentant on return and was a
16 founding member of Life After Hate. The film
17 reflects his past and the dangers of extremism,
18 offering a story about transformation and
19 accountability. She noted, after the film, there was
20 an engaging Q and A session with Mr. McAleer. She
21 added her office was in the process of working with
22 film director Peter Hutchinson on getting a link to
23 the film to share with PHRC.

24 Executive Director Lassiter noted the Governor's
25 office asked PHRC to take the lead on putting

1 together a mini report on the surge of white
2 supremacy and white nationalism.]

3 ***

4 MANAGEMENT REPORTS - Harrisburg Regional Office
5 [Heather Roth, Regional Office Director, Harrisburg,
6 reported her office had two new investigators who are
7 continuing their training plans. Her office also has
8 the same vacancies as the Pittsburgh office. She
9 reported the public hearing mentioned earlier
10 originated in the Harrisburg office, so several staff
11 members would be traveling to attend the hearing.

12 Ms. Roth noted she would be traveling to State
13 College to provide a presentation for the Century
14 Valley HR Professionals. The presentation would
15 discuss updates to religious accommodations, updated
16 guidance on bullying and harassment in education, and
17 the topic of service and support animals in all areas
18 of the Commonwealth. The Harrisburg office is
19 working on several cases which have been identified
20 as potential probable causes.]

21 ***

22 MANAGEMENT REPORTS - Philadelphia Regional Office
23 [Executive Director Lassiter reported Amber Harris,
24 Regional Office Director, Philadelphia, was not
25 present due to ongoing CROWN activities.]

MANAGEMENT REPORTS - Communications

[Amanda Brothman Jumper, Director of Communications, stated the annual report would soon be available for the public on the website. She shared upcoming events including the conclusion of Women's History Month with a talk with Minority Leader Kendra Brooks of the Philadelphia City Council discussing women and the fight for reproductive freedom. The Fair Housing Empower Hour for March was on "Fair Housing in Screening and Access: Law, Data, and Safer Alternatives." The Housing Equality Conference was scheduled for April 8, 2026, in Pittsburgh, and the 70th Anniversary Gala was scheduled for May 16, 2026, in Philadelphia. She noted information for upcoming events was available on the website.

Executive Director Lassiter noted being on a national call with civil rights organizations and on local, state sponsored calls with other commissioners, who had noted people coming onto their social media sites and agitating from a social media perspective, as well as sending hate literature through social media. He asked if PHRC had experienced similar issues on social media.

Director Brothman Jumper replied PHRC had not

1 seem similar efforts. She noted PHRC sees hateful
2 comments or negative comments but had not seen any
3 red flag comments. She noted the comments are
4 general agitation or specific case related.]

5 ***

6 MANAGEMENT REPORTS - Education

7 [Executive Director Lassiter welcomed Fatim Byrd,
8 Director of Education, to PHRC and asked him to
9 provide a brief introduction.

10 Director Byrd shared he was honored to be a part
11 of PHRC and provided his professional background in
12 Spanish literature and education. He also noted a
13 deep policy background through fellowships like TEACH
14 Plus and Philadelphia Affinity Group Network. He has
15 worked on initiatives through education as well as
16 initiatives through social justice.

17 Executive Director Lassiter noted excitement
18 about the future of the Education Division. He
19 noted, with the work of Deputy Director Chang over
20 the past three years, a seamless transition was
21 expected. He added Director Byrd would be vital with
22 the ever-changing demographic in multiple areas that
23 is becoming increasingly brown against the backdrop
24 of everything playing out with immigration.]

25 ***

1 MANAGEMENT REPORTS - Policy & Intergovernmental

2 Affairs

3 [Alana Burman, Director of Policy, Intergovernmental
4 Affairs and Mediation, reported 13 mediations were
5 conducted, nine of which were EEOC mediations. The
6 13 closed cases recouped over \$300,000 for
7 Commonwealth citizens. She also reported that the
8 mediation team would be presenting at the annual
9 Pennsylvania Conflict Management Conference on the
10 work they do at PHRC, their unique mediation program,
11 and the effectiveness of the program. She noted,
12 policy-wise, her office was working on a housing bill
13 package of ten bills, and she offered to provide
14 details to anyone interested in additional
15 information.]

16 ***

17 MANAGEMENT REPORTS - Fair Housing and Commercial

18 Property

19 [Brittany Mellinger, Director of Fair Housing and
20 Commercial Property, centered her report on the
21 upcoming Housing Equality Conference to be held on
22 April 23, 2026, in Philadelphia. She noted the
23 conference would feature keynote speakers Kelvin
24 Jeremiah and Lynette Brown-Sow. Sessions would
25 discuss AI in housing, appraisal bias, and background

1 checks. She added there was great attendance data,
2 and she encouraged anyone interested to complete
3 their registration.

4 Ms. Mellinger highlighted, with the approach of
5 Fair Housing Month, her office had seen an increase
6 in requests from a variety of sectors. She reported
7 her office would be traveling through the state in
8 April to talk to a variety of offices and get the
9 word out about Fair Housing Month.

10 Executive Director Lassiter noted, for the
11 members of the public coming from the housing space,
12 the second edition of PHRC's white paper was
13 available on PHRC's YouTube page. The video captured
14 the comments of Angela McIver. He noted housing is
15 not just a civil and human right, but people have a
16 divine right to not be discriminated against at all.]

17 ***

18 MANAGEMENT REPORTS - Rural and Civic Engagement
19 [Caroline Griffin, Director of Rural and Civic
20 Engagement, announced the upcoming rollout reception
21 of her division to be held at the Capitol Rotunda.
22 She noted PHRC would be joined by Secretary Dunn of
23 DCNR, Deputy Secretary Secord from PDA,
24 Representative Jamie Walsh, and Commissioner
25 Hardiman.

1 Director Griffin reported on her recent travel
2 to Upper Darby to provide a keynote address in
3 "Bridging the Gap, Better Health Care for Every
4 Neighborhood" with the Child Guidance Resource
5 Center. She noted, even though Upper Darby is a
6 metropolitan area, she found connection in the rural
7 space with similar problems.

8 Director Griffin noted PHRC's annual Disability
9 Conference was scheduled for June 30, 2026, in
10 Harrisburg. Save the dates would be sent soon, and
11 registration would also soon be opening. She added
12 the theme this year would be mental health, "The
13 Disabilities You Cannot See, the Rights You Can't
14 Ignore."]

15 ***

16 MANAGEMENT REPORTS - Civil Rights and Outreach
17 [Sheryl Meck, Director, Civil Rights Division,
18 reported Civil Rights Outreach Coordinators (CROC)
19 successfully completed two No Hate in Our State town
20 halls in February 2026 regarding immigration in
21 Philadelphia and regarding anti-Semitic and anti-
22 black racist graffiti which defaced Roxboro High
23 School.

24 Director Meck noted CROCs were scheduling
25 through August 2026 different outreach opportunities

1 to spread the message of PHRC.

2 Executive Director Lassiter commented there were
3 many conversations being had regarding America 250
4 coming up against the backdrop of fascism and against
5 the backdrop of disruption and protests. He asked
6 what PHRC should be aware of at the state level.

7 Director Meck replied a leading area of concern
8 to monitor was how some counties were starting to
9 consider how to make it more difficult to have
10 protests. She clarified limits being considered are
11 the incorporations of fees and fines or charging a
12 cost per officer to have on-site with the number of
13 officers being mandated. She added one of the most
14 dangerous concepts that can be played with is
15 silencing voices instead of creating safe platforms.
16 She stated the focus should be on providing safety
17 from the outside.]

18 ***

19 MANAGEMENT REPORTS - Enforcement and Compliance

20 [Sherwood Goodenough, Director of Enforcement,
21 reported his division continues to monitor active
22 MOUs and partners with regional offices to support
23 investigators through the PHRC process and
24 investigations.]

25 ***

1 OLD BUSINESS - NONE.

2 ***

3 NEW BUSINESS - NONE.

4 ***

5 PUBLIC COMMENT

6 [Ashley Mader provided comments on her housing
7 discrimination complaint at PHRC from the prior year.
8 She had withdrawn her case after an agreement was
9 reached privately outside of the PHRC process. She
10 did not have the support she needed. She, as someone
11 born with cerebral palsy and receiving SSDI, was used
12 to advocating for herself. Her case was about being
13 denied a reasonable accommodation in which she had
14 requested to pay her rent on a different day based on
15 when her SSDI payment was received. Her request was
16 denied, and in filing a complaint to the Fair Housing
17 Act, her case was escalated to an eviction trial in
18 the Court of Common Pleas.

19 Ms. Mader received several eviction notices and
20 had to defend herself eight times at the magistrate
21 before succeeding. She provided details of her
22 experiences, noting the stress of the situation led
23 to additional health issues. Her reasonable
24 accommodation was eventually granted because she was
25 able to reach an agreement while her eviction trial

1 was being scheduled.

2 Ms. Mader explained her efforts on her part were
3 due to issues at PHRC with her complaint. She
4 resolved to not only having her dispute resolved but
5 making PHRC aware of the issues, so it did not happen
6 to someone else. She asked the Commissioners to
7 understand how there can be immediate and severe harm
8 in housing cases. She noted fair housing laws are
9 meaningful in emergency housing situations. She
10 added reasonable accommodations like hers for rent
11 for people who receive SSDI is a federal law and not
12 just for subsidized housing.

13 Executive Director Lassiter thanked Ms. Mader
14 for her advocacy and for highlighting deficits in
15 PHRC.

16 Chair Bolstein thanked Ms. Mader for being
17 willing to talk with PHRC on the topic of reasonable
18 accommodations and fair housing. He noted many
19 disability accommodations have to do with physical
20 aspects like bathroom railings or parking spots. He
21 added her case was the first he had heard with regard
22 to when rent payments were due. He questioned how
23 often regional directors had heard of the same
24 issue.]

25 ***

1 [Angela McIver, Chief Executive Officer, Fair Housing
2 Rights Center in Southeastern Pennsylvania, explained
3 her Center's mission statement is to eliminate
4 housing discrimination and support the public's need
5 for safe, accessible, and affordable housing. The
6 Fair Housing Rights Center provides comprehensive
7 fair housing education, counseling, advocacy,
8 enforcement, and trauma informed services that expand
9 housing opportunities for their communities. They
10 also aim to improve compliance for occupants, housing
11 providers, home seekers, homeowners, and the housing
12 industry in numerous Pennsylvania counties.

13 Ms. McIver responded to Chair Bolstein's
14 question. She noted issues similar to Ms. Mader's
15 come up quite often. She shared her office was in
16 federal court over the same matter in 2015 or 2016.
17 Representation from a law firm ultimately helped the
18 center settle with a federal judge in chambers. The
19 party in question had numerous properties throughout
20 Pennsylvania and had doubled down on refusing to
21 change the initial complainant's rent due date,
22 because the complainant received SSDI. The property
23 owner argued they believed it was not a disability
24 matter, but was an income matter. The judge in the
25 case realized the matter was disability related as a

1 person cannot get SSDI if they do not have a
2 disability.

3 Ms. McIver presented additional comments. She
4 thanked Executive Director Lassiter for pointing out
5 her words regarding divine rights in fair housing.
6 She thanked PHRC for its fair housing white paper and
7 encouraged everyone to review the white paper and
8 support PHRC as work continues to strengthen fair
9 housing throughout the Commonwealth. She also
10 acknowledged PHRC's work for being the convener for
11 the Governor's 10-Year Housing Action Plan meeting
12 that occurred in late 2024 or early 2025 and
13 ultimately contributed to the fulfillment of the
14 Governor's Action Plan. She noted concerns around
15 realizing fair housing as mentioned several times in
16 the plan.

17 Ms. McIver stated, with PHRC, her office, and
18 other Fair Housing initiative colleagues, everyone
19 will need to make sure the rest of the Commonwealth
20 understands how crucial it is to help people access
21 fair housing free from discrimination.

22 Chair Bolstein thanked Ms. McIver for her
23 comments.]

24 ***

25 [Chair Bolstein redirected conversation back to Ms.

1 Mader's concerns. He asked whether language could be
2 added to PHRC's housing discrimination web pages that
3 clearly defined discriminatory issues. He questioned
4 Director Burman whether similar housing
5 discrimination cases could be moved quickly to
6 mediation.

7 Director Burman replied her office had the
8 capacity in mediation to begin prioritizing and
9 handling some of the housing issues on a more urgent
10 basis. She added, in addition to two volunteer
11 mediators, one of whom specializes in housing
12 mediation, her office hoped to expand the mediation
13 team.

14 Director Burman noted, with the ten-bill housing
15 package she mentioned earlier, the source of income
16 legislation being developed may help address some of
17 the issues being raised. The legislation would
18 create obligations for landlords to work with their
19 tenants around their various income sources.

20 Director Mellinger thanked Ms. Mader for sharing
21 candidly and vulnerably. She pointed out the housing
22 fact sheet developed for housing providers
23 specifically cites rent accommodations as a
24 reasonable accommodation issue. She noted her office
25 would continue to look at other ways to publicize the

1 issue. She added the issue is also included in all
2 of her disability related training materials.

3 Chair Bolstein commented, with the number of
4 landlords in Pennsylvania, not all of them were
5 likely checking the PHRC website. He noted the
6 accommodation was an easy one to make, which is why
7 he suggested moving the cases into mediation quicker.

8 He added, if the complainant can prove that they get
9 their payment on a certain date and they need to have
10 the accommodation to make the rent payment on a
11 certain date, it seemed to be an easy case for PHRC.]

12 ***

13 [Anne Puluka, Esquire, Staff Attorney, Community
14 Justice Project, stated her firm is a nonprofit civil
15 rights law firm and part of the Pennsylvania Legal
16 Aid Network. Her firm focuses on impact legislation
17 and represents low-income clients across Pennsylvania
18 in the type of discrimination cases that may fall
19 under PHRA. She noted her firm had not filed many
20 claims in the past with PHRC but would like to do so.
21 She added, with the backlog with federal civil
22 enforcement agencies, her firm believed their clients
23 could benefit from the protections under Pennsylvania
24 law.

25 Ms. Puluka requested information to clarify how

1 her firm can best present cases to PHRC. She
2 admitted, even as an attorney, she has had difficulty
3 navigating the complaint process. She noted PHRC
4 staff was extremely helpful; however, she thought
5 implementing an accessible docketing and filing
6 system with clear procedural rules would make the
7 entire process easier to follow. She provided
8 examples of her struggles with the system.

9 Executive Director Lassiter asked Ms. Puluka and
10 Chief Council Green to drop contact information in
11 the chat. He committed the Office of Chief Counsel
12 at PHRC to meeting with Mr. Puluka by the end of the
13 week to begin a partnership. He added Ms. Puluka's
14 comments were not the first time PHRC had heard
15 someone state the complaint process was complicated
16 at times.

17 Deputy Director Garcia stated PHRC procedures
18 are designed to make it easy for a person to file a
19 complaint; however, the process can be cumbersome
20 especially if someone is not familiar with the
21 process. He reviewed the timeline for someone to
22 respond to a complaint. He suggested scheduling a
23 meeting with Ms. Puluka and the Director of
24 Enforcement to review the procedures. He also
25 expressed interest in Ms. Puluka's recommendation of

1 a docketing system. He noted PHRC is working on
2 modernizing their case management system.

3 Ms. Puluka stated the entire process could be
4 more transparent. She also encouraged PHRC to
5 publish standards or guidance on seeking preliminary
6 injunctive relief in pending cases. She stated PHRC
7 has the authority to see preliminary injunctions
8 related to pending cases. Preliminary injunctions
9 can be effective tools in protecting complainants
10 while their claims are pending. She noted her office
11 represents many clients who face housing
12 discrimination and retaliatory action like lease
13 terminations, and eviction notices can be common
14 responses to people asserting their fair housing
15 rights. She added, in those situations, PHRC could
16 seek preliminary injunctions more proactively to
17 prevent clients from undergoing the stress and
18 anxiety associated with an eviction case. Similarly,
19 in disability discrimination cases, preliminary
20 injunctive relief could be a way for someone to get
21 their reasonable accommodation while a claim is
22 pending. She noted, while clients appreciate
23 monetary settlements after the fact, it can be
24 difficult if they have been evicted in the process or
25 months spent suffering without a reasonable

1 accommodation in the meantime.

2 Ms. Puluka stated, if the Commonwealth had a
3 public and known policy regarding injunctive relief,
4 complainants would feel more comfortable coming
5 forward and filing their claims. In addition, she
6 noted respondents would also have clarity on their
7 legal obligations and the potential avenues for
8 enforcement.]

9 ***

10 [Morris France stated, for transparency, his name is
11 a pseudonym he has employed since the early '90s. He
12 explained his concerns about internal policy at PHRC
13 superseding or overriding regulations or statutes.
14 He received a phone call stating a complainant was
15 given four hours to respond to a statement of facts,
16 whereas historically complainants have been given
17 three days to read, sign, and submit. He asked if
18 there had been a policy change in the internal
19 structure of PHRC or if the four-hour requirement was
20 ad hoc.

21 Executive Director Lassiter was not sure of the
22 context and requested additional clarification. He
23 recognized Mr. France from attending an in-person
24 meeting.

25 Mr. France stated he had attended in-person at

1 the August 25, 2025, meeting. In the time since the
2 meeting, he had conducted research and learned
3 interesting facts. He noted it does not go unnoticed
4 that PHRC functions with a reduction in funding by
5 the Republican legislature. He added the staff
6 reduction by 55 percent creates a bottleneck and
7 stress on the staff. He further explained his
8 question to PHRC. He explained the complainant had
9 received an email along with a statement of facts
10 regarding a retaliation complaint. The complainant
11 was only given four hours to respond to the
12 statement, make corrections, and resubmit. He added,
13 in the past, complainants were given three days for
14 the same situation.

15 Regional Director Roth responded it was
16 difficult to answer his question as the verbiage used
17 was different than what PHRC generally uses. She was
18 not aware of any internal policy where a person would
19 only receive four hours to respond to anything, and
20 if that was what happened, the situation should be
21 escalated to their regional director's office for
22 investigation.

23 Executive Director Lassiter asked if Mr. France
24 was talking about a rebuttal.

25 Mr. France stated the statement of facts he was

1 referring to was an amendment to a complaint. He
2 reiterated his question was whether there was a
3 procedural gap, a change in internal policy or if the
4 change was arbitrary.

5 Deputy Director Garcia stated, to his knowledge,
6 there had been no change in policy. He added PHRC
7 would commit to find out what may have happened.

8 Mr. France had directed the complainant to
9 submit the changes and send a copy to the director in
10 charge of public accommodations and Regional Director
11 Roth. He told the complainant the change was
12 arbitrary, because the individual may have wanted to
13 get their caseload done for the week.

14 Regional Director Roth noted she had not
15 received any information and asked Mr. France to
16 encourage the person to reach out to her.

17 Executive Director Lassiter appreciated Mr.
18 France bringing his concerns to PHRC.]

19 ***

20 [Megan Hammond, Executive Director, Fair Housing
21 Partnership of Greater Pittsburgh, explained her
22 organization assists individuals both with housing
23 discrimination allegations and with filing
24 administrative fair housing complaints. She provided
25 comments on PHRC not having a contract with the

1 Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).
2 Since the contract ceased, her organization has
3 largely filed complaints with HUD, not PHRC. Ms.
4 Hammond commented HUD provided a backstop in
5 Pennsylvania for fair housing cases. However, due to
6 current events, the administrative housing
7 discrimination complaint process at HUD is largely
8 defunct. As a result, Ms. Hammond stated her
9 organization began filing complaints with PHRC last
10 year. She acknowledged the process is better;
11 however, even she struggles with the complaint
12 process.

13 Ms. Hammond stated a typical case should not
14 require a probable cause finding, a public hearing,
15 and litigation to achieve a successful resolution.
16 She added successfully resolving cases before a
17 probable cause finding allows all parties to
18 deescalate and collaborate. She also stated
19 mediation does not have a public interest component
20 that allows PHRC to be a party to the resolution to
21 ensure the adoption of policies and subsequent
22 monitoring to make sure the housing provider is
23 successfully engaging Pennsylvanians beyond the
24 initial complainant. She stated, if PHRC did not
25 fill the void left by HUD, Pennsylvanians would

1 suffer. Ms. Hammond also noted private settlements
2 put the entire burden of resolving the practice that
3 prompted the filing on her organization instead of
4 getting the public interest partnership with a
5 government entity.

6 Ms. Hammond requested PHRC to robustly assert
7 its role within public interest and collaborate to
8 address concerns in the complaint process and to
9 ensure the enforcement of fair housing laws continues
10 to be a reality for Pennsylvanians.

11 Deputy Director Garcia thanked Ms. Hammond for
12 her comments. He noted she highlighted challenges
13 and PHRC continues to work through the complaint
14 process to conciliate whenever possible.

15 Director Griffin also thanked Ms. Hammond for
16 her insights. She noted she heard Ms. Hammond speak
17 about conciliation; however, with PHRC having a
18 robust mediation department, she questioned Ms.
19 Hammond as to her dealings with mediation.

20 Ms. Hammond was happy to continue discussions;
21 however, she wanted to raise to PHRC leadership the
22 ongoing discussion in the mediation space about
23 public interest. She shared concerns surrounding a
24 lack of public interest in the mediation process.
25 She explained she was trying to have an overall

1 conversation on the nuts and bolts of what is
2 happening at conciliation and mediation to try to see
3 if there were options and clever thoughts to find
4 ways to approach it.

5 Deputy Director Chang clarified conciliation is
6 different in that a finding has already been
7 established and the terms are written out differently
8 from a mediation settlement agreement. A mediation
9 settlement agreement does not have a finding
10 determined with the investigation. Regarding public
11 interest, she noted PHRC does ensure terms within
12 mediation settlement agreements are satisfied. She
13 added any terms within a mediation settlement
14 agreement are reviewed and monitored through the
15 Enforcement Division or by Director Burman and her
16 team.

17 Executive Director Lassiter provided comments on
18 PHRC's relationship with HUD. He explained PHRC did
19 not rescind their contract with HUD. After careful
20 consideration based on data and through discussion
21 with leadership, staff, and commissioners, PHRC made
22 a conscious decision to not continue to be
23 marginalized. He stated HUD, on their side, did put
24 PHRC on a performance improvement plan (PIP) due to
25 challenges at PHRC. He added PHRC worked to get off

1 of the PIP, which, after an extension, they were able
2 to do so. He had not previously publicly addressed
3 the narrative regarding HUD and PHRC but was taking
4 the opportunity to address the narrative. He
5 provided details of what happened with HUD and why
6 PHRC no longer has a relationship with HUD. He
7 further explained PHRC was encouraged to explore ways
8 to partner with HUD, which they have done through
9 conferences and the white paper. He noted PHRC
10 operates with the three pillars of the civil rights
11 movement of truth, love, and kindness.

12 Chair Bolstein also provided comments on the HUD
13 contract. He noted it takes two parties to work
14 together for a contract to work. He explained PHRC
15 would submit cases to HUD, only for HUD to send back
16 comments on why they could not approve the cases for
17 credit. He stated, after a while, it got to a point
18 where staff was spending too much time and effort to
19 get credit for cases PHRC had done. He added PHRC
20 looked at the situation from a standpoint of ensuring
21 Pennsylvanians would still have a remedy at PHRC if
22 there was a housing discrimination. Therefore, even
23 though there is not a HUD contract, PHRC is still
24 protecting people in housing discrimination cases.
25 He noted multiple conversations were had with staff

1 that noted citizens would not be harmed as PHRC would
2 still receive complaints, investigate complaints, and
3 provide people with a remedy. He added PHRC did not
4 have the staff to repeatedly go back and redo actions
5 with HUD just to get credit for the 50 or 60 cases
6 being submitted annually. He stated PHRC tried very
7 hard to work with HUD. He added PHRC supports the
8 citizens of the Commonwealth, and HUD was not being a
9 good partner.

10 Executive Director Lassiter commented PHRC can
11 make the decision whether or not people agree with
12 it; however, PHRC exists for the people of the
13 Commonwealth.

14 Ms. Hammond responded, regardless of the
15 reasoning, her point was simply that their cases had
16 been at HUD and would not be at PHRC, because her
17 organization has to help people. She asked how can
18 cases be better resolved prior to going to probable
19 cause and how can it be done to benefit the entire
20 Commonwealth. She added her objective was not just
21 to satisfy the individual but to make sure she can
22 walk away from a respondent knowing the policies and
23 practices that resulted in the complaint have been
24 changed in a way that she no longer needed to do an
25 investigation.

1 Chair Bolstein stated everyone was on the same
2 team and trying to accomplish the same result, which
3 is that nobody should be discriminated against in the
4 Commonwealth with regard to housing. He noted PHRC
5 has a team in place and continue to receive
6 complaints. He suggested the mediation process can
7 be used to resolve complaints quicker than using the
8 entire investigative process. He also suggested
9 housing groups may want to talk with the Director of
10 Policy, Intergovernmental Affairs, and Mediation to
11 see what can be done through mediation.]

12 ***

13 [Rachel Wentworth, Executive Director, Housing
14 Equality Center of Pennsylvania (HECP), shared her
15 nonprofit organization provides a variety of services
16 to individuals who experienced housing
17 discrimination. She noted HECP also files housing
18 discrimination complaints when their investigators
19 substantiate the presence of discriminatory conduct.
20 She spoke of HECP's experience as an organization
21 that had not recently filed complaints with PHRC.
22 She noted HECP has most frequently used HUD's
23 administrative complaint process for both client and
24 organizational complaints. In HECP's experience,
25 HUD's process was very good up until last year and

1 reliably brought about a satisfactory resolution of
2 the complaints.

3 Ms. Wentworth explained past attempts to resolve
4 complaints at PHRC had been frustrating. She was
5 willing to talk about specific areas of frustration
6 and difficulties. She hoped more substantial
7 discussions could take place. She anticipated
8 resuming filing complaints at PHRC within the next
9 month due to the overall federal situation not being
10 viable for complainants. She added HECP looked
11 forward to continuing to work with PHRC.

12 Executive Director Lassiter commented being
13 inspired by the agency and advocacy used by both Ms.
14 Hammond and Ms. Wentworth. He committed PHRC to
15 putting together a meeting consisting of the
16 representatives of the fair housing groups and
17 several PHRC directors. He stated the meetings
18 should take place once a month.

19 Director Mellinger committed to ensuring the
20 meeting happens. She will work collaboratively to
21 build an agenda to make sure the time is productive
22 and addresses the issues raised.

23 Executive Director Lassiter suggested, after the
24 best practices are discussed and PHRC looks at
25 internal practices, the information can be assembled

1 and presented to Secretary Arkoosh and Secretary
2 Hossain.

3 Chair Bolstein commented PHRC wants to be there
4 to protect the citizens of the Commonwealth from
5 housing discrimination. He added everyone can work
6 together to figure out what things PHRC should be
7 doing or what can be done better. He added the one
8 thing PHRC would not be doing is signing another
9 contract with HUD. He appreciated everybody's
10 comments.]

11 ***

12 ADJOURNMENT

13 [Chair Bolstein noted there was still not a quorum.
14 Matters to be voted on would be carried over to the
15 next meeting. He added additional congratulations to
16 everyone who worked on the CROWN Act.

17 Executive Director Lassiter thanked everyone for
18 their support of the CROWN Act. He also thanked
19 everyone for their strong voices in trying to
20 strengthen fair housing in Pennsylvania.]

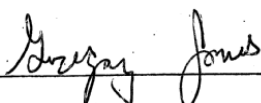
21 ***

22 [The meeting adjourned at 4:51 p.m. The next meeting
23 date is April 27, 2026, in person in Philadelphia.]

24 ***
25

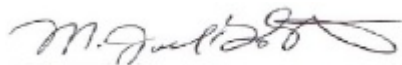
CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that the foregoing summary minutes of the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission, was reduced to writing by me or under my supervision, and that the minutes accurately summarize the substance of the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission meeting.



Gregory Jones,

Minute Clerk

Sargent's Court Reporting
Service, Inc.

M. Joel Bolstein, Chairperson



o/b/o Commissioner Mayur Patel

Mayur Patel, Secretary