



Melrose Human Rights Commission

Melrose City Hall, 562 Main St, Melrose, MA 02176

[Human Rights Commission Official Website](https://www.cityofmelrose.org/humanrightscommission)

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May 19, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Lizzy Barr (Chair), Jay Stapp, Brian Kochanowski, Elizabeth Kowal, Kelsey Lima, Linda Thompson, Laura Bergsten

Members Absent: Randall Carter, Joseph Phillips, Rev. Dr. Susanne Intriligator (Clergy Liaison), Manjula Karamcheti (City Council Liaison)

Members of the Public: N/A

Call to Order: Meeting was called to order by Chairperson Barr at 7:07 p.m. with a quorum of 7 Commissioners present.

READING OF THE MINUTES

Prior Meeting Minutes:

- Chairperson Barr entertained a motion to accept Minutes of April Meeting as written
 - Commissioner Stapp moved; Commissioner Kochanowski seconded
 - The motion passed unanimously

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- The Chair noted that no member(s) of the public were present. The Chair tabled a motion to open public comment

REGULAR BUSINESS

Chairperson's Administrative Report:

- New Commissioner Introductions
 - Commissioners Kowal, Bergsten, and Thompson
- Chairperson Barr's meeting with City Councilor Maya Jamaledine
 - Discussed the Commission's intake and referral process for discrimination complaints
- Halo Studio Spotlight
 - Salon reached out for a spotlight on the MHRC
- Website updates
 - MHRC's website has been updated

Treasurer's Report

- Reminder of urgency to spend remaining funds in General Account by the end of the month
- Chairperson Barr entertained a motion to approve the purchase of "Know Your Rights" Red Cards from Printed Union/Red Card Orders in multiple languages in the amount of \$1,058.00
 - Commissioner Stapp moved; Commissioner Thompson seconded
 - The motion passed unanimously
 - Discussion regarding Melrose City Council vote/action regarding ICE and the need for Know Your Rights Red Cards
 - Chairperson Barr will review City Council Meeting Minutes and reach out to City Councilor Maya Jamaledine for more information to share with Commission
 - Commissioner Stapp reminded Commission that if Commissioners have further discussion or questions about a motion, Commissioners may object to a vote, ask questions, and then vote may proceed again
- Chairperson Barr entertained a motion to approve the purchase of a 25' x 3' hanging banner from Sachem Signs in the amount of \$750.00
 - Commissioner Thompson moved; Commissioner Kochanowski seconded
 - The motion passed unanimously
- MHRC will not order flyers or business cards at this time
 - Commission will direct funds to items to donate to Pride

Education & Community Action

- Chairperson Barr and Commissioner Stapp met with City Solicitor Shannon Phillips on 4/15
 - MHRC **cannot** use Donation Fund to give to 501(c)(3)s or other charitable undertakings (like Pride) due to the Anti-Aid Amendment
 - MHRC **can** use funds to actively participate in events like Pride
 - Commission can purchase items for events but cannot make cash/in-kind donations
 - MHRC **can** post a variety of organizations for community members to give to directly
- Discussion of potential workaround: purchasing bus passes or Uber gift cards for people needing transportation assistance
 - Chairperson Barr will schedule meeting with herself, Commissioner Stapp, and Commissioner Lima to meet with City Solicitor Shannon Phillips to discuss

Advocacy

- Introduced updated Intake and Referral process for discrimination complaints
 - Shift from an investigation and mediation focus to a referral and resource approach
 - New proposed process has Complaint, Review, and Referral process flow steps
 - Involves receiving complaints of discrimination based on protected classes in settings of employment, education, credit & lending, housing, and places of accommodation, and referring complainant and/or respondent to appropriate agencies or resources
 - Chairperson Barr requested that Commission members review document and come to June meeting prepared to discuss and vote on moving forward with implementation
- Discussed evolving regulatory and discrimination protection landscape at federal level (EEOC, HUD, DOJ CRD)
 - Complainants will likely have best protections under state law and with the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD)

Community Awareness

- Reviewed Resource Guides
 - LGBTQ+ Resource Guide is reviewed and ready for posting
 - Chairperson Barr requested that Commission review resource guide by 5/31 for posting on social media and website for Pride Month in June
 - Chairperson Barr requested input by 5/31 for a press release to accompany the publication of the resource guide for Pride Month
 - Immigration Resource Guide
 - Commissioner Thompson volunteered to review Immigration Resource Guide for accuracy
 - Once reviewed, Commission will determine time frame for publication

NEW BUSINESS

Exercise - Group Goal Setting

- Commissioners used Lucid to reflect on issues impacting the community, focus areas for the Commission, and individual pathways for contribution to overarching goals

OTHER/UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- Commissioner Stapp motioned to allocate up to \$238.87 of remaining General Account balance to Pride expenses and to transfer any remaining account balance to Donation Account (pending guidance from City Solicitor Shannon Phillips)
 - Commissioner Thompson seconded
 - The motion passed unanimously
 - Chairperson Barr will schedule meeting with herself, Commissioner Stapp, and Commissioner Lima to meet with City Solicitor Shannon Phillips to discuss transfer of funds between accounts
- Juneteenth liaison
 - Commissioner Lima will reach out to the mayor regarding Juneteenth planning
- Pride Month
 - Commissioner Carter will send Pride wish list for purchases
- Social media calendar
 - Chairperson Barr requested that Commissioners review the Social Media Calendar and scheduled Pride Month post by 5/31
- MHRC schedule reminder
 - Next meeting is scheduled for 6/9 at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom
 - Commission does not meet over the summer but activities continue

ADJOURNMENT

- Chairperson Barr adjourned the meeting at 8:37 p.m.