



CITY OF PITTSBURGH
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS
RACHEL SHEPHERD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Monthly Commission Meeting Agenda

October 6, 2025

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. MEETING MINUTES
 - a. September 8, 2025
3. PUBLIC COMMENTS
4. COMMITTEES
 - a. FINANCE
 - b. PERSONNEL
 - c. COMMUNITY RELATIONS
5. DIRECTOR'S REPORT
6. OLD BUSINESS
7. NEW BUSINESS
 - a. November Commission Meeting at Hugh Lane
8. ADJOURNMENT

Commission on Human Relations Meeting Minutes

Monday, September 8, 2025

Attendance: virtual meeting via Zoom

Commissioners:

Teaira Collins
Richard Morris
Isabel Ruiz-Flint
Kyle Webster
Luz Blandon

Staff:

Rachel Shepherd, Director
Christopher Sault, Deputy Director
Rita Turpin Porterfield, Senior Investigator
Jeffrey Cameron, Senior Investigator
Lauren Law, Senior Investigator
Kevin Carroll, Administrative Assistant
Courtney Smith, Fiscal & Contracting Coordinator

Guests: Pre-registered through Zoom, Sherri Bridget, Thea Young

- I. **CALL TO ORDER** – Chair Cmr. Teaira called the meeting to Order at 3:33 p.m.
- II. **ADOPTION OF MINUTES: 7/1/2025** –
 1. Corrections: None
 2. Motion to adopt minutes, including any corrections noted above, made by Commissioner Morris
 3. Seconded by Commissioner Webster
 4. Unanimous voice vote in favor
- III. **PUBLIC COMMENTS**
 1. None
- IV. **COMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORT**
 - A. *Committee Reports*
 - i. *Finance Committee* – 2026 Budget is up for vote; other than last month's notes there are no updates/business to report.
 - ii. *Personnel Committee* –

1. Commissioner Webster looking for approval of evaluation form from Commissioners to evaluate Director Shepherd; thereafter, use the form for feedback (once accepted)

iii. ***Community Relations Committee*** –

1. None

iv. ***Public Hearing Section*** –

1. None

B. Director's Report –

i. Personnel and Administration:

1. More commissioner suggestions were forwarded to Darius in the Mayor's office. Deputy Mayor Pawlak stated that they have made contact with some people and are working to schedule interviews.
2. HUD no longer permits use of their logo on our marketing materials. We were compelled to remove any and all marketing materials that have that logo or statements by HUD.

ii. Cases, Investigation, and Enforcement:

As of 9/3/2025 there are:

1. 52 open investigations (+10 since August);
2. 66 pending intakes (+9 since August);
3. 5 cases awaiting a response and assignment (-2 since August);
4. 8 pending mandatory conciliations (-3 since August);
5. 5 cases in court (+1 since August); and
6. 2 cases on the public hearing track (-2 since August).
7. Compliance Review saw ten determinations on August 18th.
8. We completed 65 cases and submitted 19 intake-only cases to the EEOC this year. We will be paid for 57 cases and 17 intakes.
9. We completed 21 housing cases and will be paid for 20 cases.

iii. Meetings and New Connections

1. Coordinating with Sarah Rosso of Hugh Lane, including a name change clinic by the end of the year

2. The directors met with Chris Rosselot of Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group to discuss the upcoming housing legislation
 3. Upcoming meeting with Marlene van Nelson of Trellis Legal, LLC re commercial property/renters rights.
- iv. Education, Outreach, Meetings, and New Connections:
1. Participated in National Night Out and City in the Streets in East Liberty and Allentown
 2. Dep. Dir. Soult presented to Center for Victims during their regular staff meeting regarding City's domestic violence protections.
 3. Second annual Employment Discrimination CLE was conducted by Rita Porterfield
 4. John Lewis Day of Action went from tabling to engaging with protesters
 5. Civic Learning Youth Day – tabling in CCB lobby to distribute materials
 6. Fair Housing for Landlords training w/ FHP
 7. Just received 2nd quarterly report from Just Mediation Project; several dozen case participants have been given information. JMP is 95% successful in maintaining housing through mediation
 8. Advertising update:
 - i. Running bus ads through the September
 - ii. Full page ad with Soul Pitt in summer issue
 - iii. Reviewing Qburgh, Jewish Chronicle, and Championship Chase options
 - iv. Lamar billboards secured for Penn Ave. + 31st St. (Strip) during August; Blvd. of the Allies ramp in Nov./Dec.
 9. Will table at Eradicate Hate Summit in September
- v. Special Projects
1. Rules and Regs updates w/ solicitors
 2. Protection updates:
 - i. Housing Status 9/16 is intro, standing committee is 9/22

- ii. Disparate impact/Civil Rights; Council has this; waiting on final review from our solicitors; enshrines disparate impact theory, eliminates filing delays for joint OMI/CHR cases
- iii. Commercial Property will be introduced at council soon; we have final approval from the solicitors

vi. Upcoming events:

- 1. Eradicate Hate Summit (tabling) September 15-17 from 9am-5pm Convention Center
- 2. IAOHRA Conference (travel) October 4th-9th Anchorage, Alaska
- 3. Legal Protections for Survivors at Home & Work, with Standing Firm, October 30th, K&L Gates, Downtown Pittsburgh

v. **OLD BUSINESS** – None

vi. **NEW BUSINESS** – State of Black Pittsburgh coming up in October, Commissioners and staff welcome to attend.

vii. **ADJOURNMENT** – Commissioner Collins moved to adjourn, which was seconded by Commissioner Morris. Unanimously adjourned at 4:21 p.m.



CITY OF PITTSBURGH
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS
RACHEL SHEPHERD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

October 6, 2025

PERSONNEL AND ADMINISTRATION

- HUD distributed its contract guidance for 2025-2026. We are continuing to receive complaints as usual and will adjust our dual-filing practices according to the new regulations. The directors met with Jake Pawlak to discuss the changes and potential impact to the city at large.
- The mayor's preliminary budget was released on September 30th. We were not granted any of our requests due to budgetary constraints of the city. No cuts will be made to our department.
- The Housing Status protected class was approved with a unanimous vote by City Council. In the coming months we will conduct outreach and education to share the details with landlords and tenants across Pittsburgh.

CASES AND ENFORCEMENT

- As of 10/6/2025 there are:
 - 60 open investigations (+8 since September);
 - 65 pending intakes (-1 since September);
 - 15 cases awaiting a response and assignment (+13 since September);
 - 9 pending mandatory conciliations (+1 since September);
 - 5 cases in court (no change); and
 - 2 cases on the public hearing track (no change).
- Compliance Review will see 11 determinations at the meeting today, including six settlements.

MEETINGS AND NEW CONNECTIONS

- Rescheduled meeting with Marlene van Nelson of Trellis Legal, LLC to discuss commercial property protections will occur next week.
- Connecting with the Brashear Association to discuss our collaboration on their employment and youth programs.
- The directors met with Councilperson Mosley to discuss the Commission and the Housing Status protection, and with Councilperson Strassburger to clarify the City Code updates being presented on 10/7.
- I met with Jamaal Craig of CCAC Allegheny regarding their ethnic and diversity studies program. We are exploring collaboration, including presenting to various classes, joint outreach events, and a larger grant-funded project.

- I discussed potential next steps for Stand for All Pittsburgh with Rev. Liddy Barlow, specifically around community tension as related to the hate and bias outreach the group is conducting.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

- Eradicate Hate Summit - tabling
- Government and Community Leadership Day - tabling
- Disability Pride - tabling
- The State of Black Pittsburgh

SPECIAL PROJECTS

- Protection updates:
 - Housing Status – Passed finally on 9/30
 - Commercial Property – Will be introduced at council soon
 - Disparate Impact/Civil Rights – will go to City Council on 10/7
- Strategic Planning will be finished by the end of 2025

UPCOMING EVENTS

Outfest (tabling)	October 11 th 3pm-8pm
Hazelwood Green	
Legal Protections for Survivors at Home & Work (training)	October 30 th
https://www.dvampgh.org/sfcle	
Pittsburgh's K&L Gates office 210 6th Street, PGH 15222	
Building a Beloved Community (Pitt & PHRC)	November 17 th 9am-6pm
https://www.crsp.pitt.edu/building-beloved-community-program	
University of Pittsburgh Alumni Hall (Ballroom) 4227 5th Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15213	



CITY OF PITTSBURGH
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS
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MEMORANDUM

To: Councilmember Erika Strassburger
From: Director Rachel Shepherd, PghCHR
Re: Article V, Chapters 651 and 653, and Section 659.07 Updates

In advance of the presentation of the City Code updates on behalf of the Commission on Human Relations (PghCHR), please allow me to elaborate on the reasoning for the proposed changes, which seek to:

1. Simplify language to offer clarity and reduced administrative burden when protected statuses are added;
2. Add definitions for commonly used phrases from our field;
3. Preserve the antidiscrimination enforcement power of the City in the wake of devastating federal changes;
4. Expand the umbrella of protections more explicitly so Pittsburghers know how they are protected from discrimination; and
5. Remove barriers for investigations happening simultaneously with PghCHR and the Office of Municipal Investigations.

1. Simplify

We propose removing the lists of protected statuses from various sections and replacing them with “Actual or perceived protected class identity or status” so that if a related section has protected statuses added, the list does not need to be updated in multiple places within City Code. For example, when PghCHR adds Housing Status as a protected class in Section 659.03, it will only need to be added to the list at the top of the section, not in each subsection.

2. Define

Defining terms specific to the enforcement of antidiscrimination provisions within City Code will clarify commonly used phrases which have not been defined previously. This includes definitions for “protected class”, “protected activity”, and “disparate impact” which are essential to the core functions of PghCHR, but are not commonly known outside of this field.

3. Preserve

Executive Orders and mandates from federal agencies are rolling back the rights of marginalized groups by restructuring the way civil rights are enforced. PghCHR wants to preserve its ability to continue investigating discrimination and enforcing civil rights laws here in Pittsburgh by adding language to the Code. While the abilities are implied in the current language, we propose making it transparent to protect from legal challenges.

4. Be Explicit

Section 659.07, which has not been updated since 1996, will expand to include the local protections which currently fall under their federal equivalents. For example, sex is a federal protection which also includes sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and survivors of domestic violence. Rather than leave the protected status of "sex" open to legal interpretation, we propose listing all of the relevant local protected statuses in this section. This does not expand upon the purview of PghCHR, but rather provides clarity for protected statuses such as preferred language, which currently can be accepted for complaint under "national origin" only.

5. Remove Barriers

The City Code outlined boundaries for filing complaints and information sharing between OMI and PghCHR due to the high number of overlapping discrimination and municipal investigations in the 1990s. After discussing the matter with OMI Manager Erin Bruni, we decided to remove the barriers currently in place to allow for investigations to happen simultaneously when filed with both offices.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions or concerns about our proposed Code changes, please contact me.



FAIR HOUSING PROTECTIONS

Housing Status

QUESTIONS ABOUT THESE PROTECTIONS AND FILING COMPLAINTS

If you have questions about these protections or if you may have experienced discrimination in Housing in Pittsburgh, please call, email, or message us using one of the methods below.

C O N T A C T



414 Grant St, Room 908
Pittsburgh, PA 15219



human.relations@
pittsburghpa.gov



412-255-2600



<https://pghchr.creatio.com>



PROTECTED CLASSES UNDER THE PITTSBURGH CITY CODE'S UNLAWFUL HOUSING PRACTICES

This protection is designed to remove barriers to housing for individuals who, at some point, had no place to call home. Assumptions and prejudices associated with homelessness should not interfere with a person's ability to find new housing. Anyone could become homeless at any time due to circumstances outside their control.

Therefore, as of October 2025, housing providers may not discriminate against persons because of their "Housing Status" within the City of Pittsburgh.

The new protected class of "**Housing Status**" means: "The actual or perceived type of housing in which an individual resides, or previously resided in, whether publicly or privately owned; or the status of not having a fixed residence, including the status of living on the streets or in a homeless shelter or similar temporary residence; or currently or formerly living in transitional, temporary, or shelter housing; or lacking a residential rental housing history in whole or in part."

Housing Status overlaps with other protected classes like race, familial status, survivor of domestic violence, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and more. The goal is to give housing choice to everyone regardless of their membership in a protected class.





FAIR HOUSING PROTECTIONS

Housing Status

WHO MUST COMPLY WITH THESE PROTECTED CLASS PROVISIONS?

The following is a non-exhaustive list of housing providers who must comply with the housing status protection, and other fair housing laws:

- Individuals; Corporations, Partnerships, Limited Liability Companies (“LLCs”)
- Other Business Entities
- Property Owners and Property Managers
- Landlords and Persons Who Sublet Their Apartment(s) (“Sublessors”)
- Homeowners Associations and Condominium Associations;
- Persons Who are Selling Their Property or Who are Advertising Property
- Lenders, such as Banks and Mortgage Brokerage Services
- Insurance Providers
- Realtors and Real Estate Agents
- Home Appraisers



The following is a non-exhaustive list of unlawful acts that may not be done based on someone’s current or former Housing Status:

- Refuse to rent, sell, insure, or finance the purchase of housing, which includes but is not limited to an outright refusal and a refusal to negotiate terms
 - “I don’t rent to people who can’t keep a roof over their head.”
- Make housing unavailable or falsely deny that housing is available
 - “Sorry, I just rented that house to someone else,” but the dwelling is still available.
- Steer someone to and/or away from particular areas, neighborhoods, or communities
 - “You may feel more comfortable in a place with people like you.”
- Set different terms, conditions, and/or privileges on the terms of sale or rental
 - Higher security deposit, monthly rent, or fees than others; requiring a co-signer for only them
- Use different qualification criteria for sale or rental
 - Requiring a higher credit score, income, or additional references
- Provide different services, privileges and/or facilities
 - Disallowing use of a community room, laundry facilities,
- Fail to make repairs, delay in making repairs, and/or make inadequate repairs
 - Assuming the tenant can go without repairs because they have experienced worse
- Make, print, and/or publish discriminatory statements
 - Advertising a “no drama” building
- Harass someone, including intimidation, coercion, or making threats
 - “I’ll let you live here, but one wrong move and you’re gone!”