

GEC – May 2026 Minutes

Gender Equity Commission

5/7/26

Staffer: Talia O'Brien

- ☐ Roll Call:
 - ☐ Councilperson Deborah Gross (Joined meeting after roll call)
 - ☐ Avery Hart
 - ☐ Devon Taliaferro
 - ☐ Julian McClain
 - ☐ Audra Mitchell

- ☐ Approval of April Minutes
 - **Motioned:**
 - **Seconded:**
 - **No quorum present, April minutes were not voted on.**

- ☐ Public Comment: *No Public Comment.*
 - An email was received on May 3 from Ms. Monda Williams, a doctoral student at Duquesne University, conducting research on the impact of inequitable practices in workplaces on Black women/marginalized groups in the Pittsburgh region. Ms. Williams requested information on data collection methodology for reports on the Gender Equity webpage on the City website, and any other relevant sources. Staff connected Ms. Williams with Commissioner Rachel Shepard (also affiliated with the Commission on Human Relations) to provide guidance and share available information.

- ☐ Report of Special Committees:
 - 5 Year Action Plan
 - ☐ *Summary:* The departmental survey was distributed to departments on April 27 and will be open until May 29. The demographic questions related to department personnel were removed from the survey at the suggestion from HR. HR informed staff that departments do not have direct access to race, gender, and age data for their employees, which could lead to inconsistent or inaccurate responses. Instead, HR has offered to work directly with Commissioner Devon Taliaferro and GEC staffer Talia O'Brien to compile a report with personnel

demographic information, rather than collecting it through the survey. We will work to advance the report with HR while the survey is open.

- ☐ As of the meeting date, no responses had been received. The survey was sent to a primary contact (department director) and a secondary contact (assistant director or executive assistant) for each department. Staffer offered to share the full list of contacts with commission members. Members discussed the importance of direct outreach to department heads given historically low email survey response rates from City departments. Commissioners recommended the following email reminder cadence: (1) around May 15th (approximately two weeks before deadline) and (2) around May 25th (a few days before deadline).
- ☐ Following Councilperson Gross joining and establishing quorum, a motion was made to allow a conditional extension of the survey deadline beyond May 29, 2026, if response rates require additional time.
 - ☐ **Motion to extend the deadline if needed:** Devon Taliaferro
 - ☐ **Seconded:** Avery Hart
 - ☐ **Extend survey deadline if needed is approved.**
- ☐ Unfinished Business:
 - **Internal Policy: Pregnancy Loss Leave**
 - ☐ *Summary:* Shared a first draft of the policy revisions at April's GEC meeting and shared it with the LGBTQIA+ & GEC working group at their first meeting on 4/21. Both commissions discussed the potential overlap with the Paid Sick Days Act and the possibility of trying to update both policies at the same time to ensure both are aligned and offer consistent protections.
 - ☐ Outstanding questions remain:
 - ☐ Structure of policy: Whether the leave should be structured as additional PTO or as an eligible use category within employees' existing PTO bank.
 - ☐ Number of days: The current policy provides 3 days. The GEC Commission previously discussed expanding to 5 days. A final determination on the appropriate number of days is still needed.
 - ☐ Per-Event vs. Annual Pool: Whether each qualifying event (e.g., reproductive loss, an endometriosis flare) triggers its own

allotment of days, or whether there is a single annual pool of days that employees draw from, consecutively or non-consecutively.

- Next steps:
 - LGBTQIA+ Commission will provide the GEC Commission feedback on the policy language. Staffers will then compile both commissions' edits into one consolidated draft.
 - The consolidated draft will be brought back to the Gender Equity Commission for final review.
 - Once language is finalized by both commissions, a meeting with HR, Commissioner Taliaferro and Staffer O'Brien will be scheduled to assess viability, determine day limits, and evaluate budgetary and administrative impacts. HR's feedback will be shared with both the Gender Equity and LGBTQIA+ Commissions to determine where to go from there.

- **Free Menstrual Products and Contraceptives in All City Owned Facilities with Restrooms**

- *Summary:* At the internal working group last month, we learned that The City's new ADA Transition Plan is nearing completion and will include an inventory of restrooms in every public-facing, city-owned building, directly addressing the barrier of not having a baseline facility inventory. Anne Marie Ellison, a City employee in the Office of Equal Protection and a commissioner on the LGBTQIA+ Commission, agreed to compile the restroom data from the ADA plan for use by both commissions.
- Approval for summer interns starting later in May 2026 to help with:
 - Looking at the restroom inventory and suggesting sub-set of locations for program roll out based on use, location, etc.
 - Price model and cost structure analysis - Researching how other cities structure this program financially and long-term sustainability
 - General peer city benchmarking - Implementation approaches, timelines, outcomes from comparable programs
 - Research & identify both public and private funding/partnership opportunities
 - Create an outline for community need based on research/data that can be used to communicate the need and benefit of a

program like this which could help us build a compelling case for council/leadership if or when the time comes to pilot the program.

- ☐ Intern deliverables will be shared with the Commission as they are available for feedback and direction.
 - ☐ Staff met new President and CEO of Planned parenthood of western PA last month, Stephanie Phillips. Stephanie shared methods in which PP can be a partner and resource for the city by helping bridge inequity gaps through promotion of resources, proactive protections, and addressing misinformation in the community. They expressed willingness to support the Gender Equity Commission's free menstrual and contraceptive products initiative. Specifically, they offered to assist with navigating the sensitive considerations around where and how to make these products available for youth, and to provide guidance on stakeholder engagement and building momentum for the initiative.
 - ☐ Commissioner McClain raised that the LGBTQIA+ Commission is working on a related effort to convert eligible single stall restrooms in city facilities to all-gender or family restrooms by updating signage and labeling, without major plumbing reconstruction. This effort is being pursued in parallel with the menstrual products initiative, as both rely on the same restroom inventory. While they are related, he asked if there could be formal alignment and support from the GEC to work with the LGBTQIA+ Commission to move this forward.
 - ☐ Commissioner Gross indicated support for the initiative and offered to assist from her office, including consulting with the law department and reviewing city code if legislation is required.
 - ☐ **Motion to formally support the LGBTQIA+ Commission's efforts on non-gendered/all-gender restroom designation in city facilities:** Julian McClain
 - ☐ **Seconded:** Councilperson Deborah Gross
 - ☐ **GEC formal collaboration with the LGBTQIA+ Commission on this initiative is approved.**
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- ☐ GEC & LGBTQIA+ Working Group: Additional items discussed:
 - Upcoming events and opportunities to participate:
 - ☐ Pride (parade 6/7)

- ☐ Commissioner McClain is helping to coordinate Pride, volunteers may be needed for the City table. Interested commissioners should reach out to Julian directly.
- ☐ New Business:
 - GEC Website
 - ☐ Commissioner Taliaferro raised that the GEC's webpage on the City's website. is significantly outdated, with content last updated in 2021-2022. The page does not list current commissioner names and may not reflect the current mission and vision. Concern was raised that low public comment participation may be related to limited public awareness of the commission, its meeting schedule, and how to access meetings. Members discussed the need to review and update the webpage and broader public-facing presence. Staffer will prepare an outline of elements to update for the June 2026 meeting so commissioners can discuss priorities.
 - GEC Bylaws
 - ☐ Commissioner McClain noted that the GEC lacks formal bylaws, an effort that the LGBTQIA+ Commission is currently updating. He offered to share the LGBTQIA+ Commission's bylaws as a reference, noting those bylaws have been used to address attendance and unexcused absence issues. Staffer suggested this effort could be pursued in conjunction with the website update, potentially including the establishment of commission chair positions and committee structures.
- ☐ Announcements:
 - Julian McClain:
 - ☐ Pittsburgh Pride Parade is scheduled for June 7
 - ☐ Pittsburgh Pirates are hosting a Pride Night on June 11 and are specifically seeking participation from city commissioners. Julian noted that he would follow-up event details with commissioners via email.
 - Councilperson Deborah Gross:
 - ☐ Earlier in the week, City Council participated in a lobbying trip to Harrisburg to meet with House Democratic leadership, including the Speaker, Appropriations Committee, and the Governor's policy staff. Councilperson Gross advocated for investment in childcare, a long-

standing gender equity priority, focused on increasing both the quality and quantity of childcare in the City. She highlighted the existing CRiB Program at the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA), which provides investments to help entrepreneurs expand or create childcare centers. The program, originally seeded by a City Council investment sponsored in 2019, has grown through PNC partnership and URA administration to create new childcare seats. The program also includes free business development classes, and over 90% of businesses supported are women-owned, with a majority being minority women-owned. Councilperson Gross confirmed she will continue Harrisburg advocacy on childcare funding.

□ Adjourned

- **Motion:** Devon Taliaferro
- **Seconded:** Councilperson Deborah Gross
- **Meeting is adjourned.**