
Berea Human Rights Commission

Regular Meeting Minutes

Date: June 24, 2026

Location: 3rd Floor Conference Room, Berea City Hall

I. Call to Order

- The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m. by Vice Chair, Susie Harris. The Chair, Felecia Ballard, was running a few minutes late.
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II. Roll Call

Present:

- Felecia Ballard
- Mim Pride
- Doug Martin
- Susie Harris
- Sharyn Mitchell
- Heather Johnson

Absent:

- None

Welcome Visitors:

- None
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III. Approval of Minutes

- **May 27, 2026 Minutes** were sent to the Commission prior to the meeting.
 - o Motion: Mim Pride moved to approve minutes. Motion Seconded. Motion Carried.
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IV. Treasurer's Report

- Report was submitted by Heather Johnson and reviewed by Commission. Susie Harris noted that some proposed expenses had already been purchased and needed to be moved to the spent section.
 - Motion: Mim Pride moved to approve report with noted corrections. Motion Seconded. Motion Carried.
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V. Unfinished Business

- **2026 Juneteenth Celebration**
Madison County Juneteenth Weekend
 - Felecia Ballard, Sharyn Mitchell, and Susie Harris gave updates on Richmond's event:
 - The Richmond Juneteenth event had a vendor-focused, block-party atmosphere with strong community outreach.
 - Attendance was steady, though not large; a poorly angled Richmond Register photo created a negative perception of low attendance.
 - The event conflicted with a Pride event downtown on the same day.
 - Layout included vendors around a field, a DJ in the middle, and food trucks nearby.
 - Programming included a posting of colors reenactment, performances by Sister Lala and Corey Jackson on violin, and remarks by sponsor groups about their organizations.
 - Parking was a minor issue, though early arrivals found side-street parking.
 - The group discussed perceptions that Richmond attendees are hesitant to travel to Berea and the need to encourage cross-city participation.
 - Richmond organizers plan to fundraise more for next year. Berea Human Rights Commission contributed \$200 to their event this year, and there is hope that fundraising can reduce direct group contributions in the future.
 - Juneteenth 2026 Debrief for Berea:
 - Attendance was counted at 251 people.
 - 50 children's meals were distributed.
 - Feedback included a suggestion to move the headline act to the middle of the program because rain has repeatedly affected late slots.
 - Music received positive feedback.
 - The group expressed interest in inviting Billy Duvall, Jr. back for a future event, such as Christmas.
 - Collaboration with Allie was considered essential to the event's planning and execution.
 - The mayor and a city council member, Steve Caudill, attended.
 - Event shirts received a positive reaction.
 - The program included both younger and older performers, and it was noted that Richmond's program did not include younger participants.

- Berea Event Layout and Sound Accessibility:
 - Some attendees and tabling groups were too far from the stage and could not hear well.
 - Suggested improvements included:
 - Angling tables to create a more enclosed area closer to the stage.
 - Placing tables on both sides of the field.
 - Considering tents on both sides.
 - Assessing use of the bleachers.
 - Bringing the entire setup inward while maintaining flexibility to expand if attendance is high.
 - Most tables did not require electricity, allowing greater flexibility in placement.
 - The current layout may have been designed to allow equipment access from a nearby road.
 - The group will talk with Ali Bair about reconfiguring the layout to improve enclosure and sound.
 - Additional sound reinforcement or stage repositioning may need to be evaluated.
 - Venue and Staging Cost Considerations
 - In the past, the school's front area was used because staging was available and costs could be shared with a Friday event.
 - A prior staging cost was referenced as \$5,300, with cost-sharing reducing the expense.
 - The group agreed that cost-sharing for staging is beneficial and may be pursued again.
- Juneteenth 2027 Planning
 - The group began discussing Juneteenth 2027 planning.
 - Planning should begin in January to identify dates and place the event on the calendar.
 - The group also discussed coordinating with Richmond to avoid conflicts with other major events, such as Pride.
 - Future planning should include:
 - Rain contingency plans.
 - Layout and sound improvements.
 - Fundraising targets and responsibilities.
 - Cross-city collaboration and scheduling.
- Cross-Organization Engagement and Future Collaboration
 - Aaron Milton, President Richmond-Madison County NAACP was initially hesitant about Berea, but attended the Berea Juneteenth event, stayed the entire time, and learned about our previous Juneteenth events, Camp Nelson, and Berea College history.
 - Milton plans to attend the NAACP meeting in Berea in August at the library.
 - Bill Williams and possibly another speaker may be invited to present historical information.

- There is interest in hosting the Black History program in Berea in February 2027, building on local history and resources.

- **2026 Budget**

- The current budget balance was discussed as approximately \$709 after accounting for proposed expenses.
- Actual expenses spent or committed, including Juneteenth expenses, total \$2,410.04, leaving an actual balance of \$1,339.96.
- The group confirmed there is approximately \$750 remaining for purchases.
- A reimbursement for "Land of Promise" is pending and requires a canceled check.
- Additional unsubmitted expenses include two banners at \$22 each.
- The tablecloth expense was identified as already spent and part of Susie's Juneteenth reimbursements, so it will be moved from the proposed list to the spent category.
- An invoice is needed from Ali/AMP Berea for the \$2,000 Juneteenth funds before a check can be issued.
- There is urgency to submit invoices and complete purchases before the city closes the books for the fiscal year, likely by June 30.
- The commission agreed to move forward with purchases promptly, gather needed information by June 25, and complete purchases over the weekend of June 27–28.
- Planned Purchases and Assignments
 - The commission decided to proceed quickly with ordering approved items.
 - Purchase assignments and details included:
 - Printer: Felecia Ballard will purchase the printer. An amount of \$80 was discussed, with some flexibility.
 - Folding Tables: Six-foot folding tables at Menards were noted as costing approximately \$49 each.
 - Tent: Susie will research and purchase a tent, likely a blue 10x10 size, possibly from Amazon for easier reimbursement.
 - Susie will look up additional purchasing information and share it the next day so purchases can be completed over the weekend.

- **2025 Annual Report**

- Sharyn Mitchell presented a draft report and the Commission discussed
 - This is the first time some members have worked on one and that the last available example was from 2020.
 - The draft is narrative-based; dates that may be added are in parentheses.
 - Appointment dates and membership information are confusing and need verification.
 - The group discussed whether the report should use a calendar year or fiscal year format, with a preference stated for calendar year.
 - The budget section should be simplified by showing the beginning balance as of January 1 and listing expenses clearly.
 - Historical budget context included:
 - The commission's budget was cut to zero in 2020.
 - It was later restored to \$500.

- Previously, the commission had a budget of \$8,000 with part-time staff and an office.
 - The revised draft will be circulated via email.
 - Approval may be handled by common consent unless a voice vote is preferred.
 - Commission Membership and Appointments
 - Appointment and reappointment timelines need clarification for multiple commissioners.
 - Specific questions included:
 - Reappointments
 - Term completion dates
 - Mark Workman's status as either resigned or term-ended
 - Katie Hegseth and Karen Tod's expired terms
 - The group will check 2024–2025 minutes and official city records to correct the membership section before finalizing the annual report.
 - Historical Office Operations and Public Engagement
 - The commission discussed historical context about the former office on Broadway.
 - The office was staffed part-time and served walk-ins.
 - Assistance focused on housing, employment, and public accommodation.
 - Many cases were referred elsewhere or were outside the commission's jurisdiction.
 - A non-police department location was considered potentially important for community trust.
- **2026 KY Civil Rights Hall of Fame Award**
 - Sharyn Mitchell distributed materials for the nomination for Rev. Kent Gilbert for review.
 - The group reviewed and successfully reduced the narrative to the required 500-word count.
 - The submission deadline is June 30, 2026.
 - Nomination Packet and Submission Process
 - The full nomination packet includes:
 - Narrative.
 - Letters of support.
 - Biographical information.
 - One letter of support from Pastor Mayor Boyd needs to be recopied on letterhead.
 - A handwritten biographical information page must be typed and included.
 - The online submission form has a non-functional "dead button," which is a known issue.
 - A student helped create a fillable PDF to work around the broken online form.
 - Other documents will be submitted as attachments.
 - An external firm reviews nominations.
 - The announcement date for winners is unknown.

- **John G. Fee Award**

- Dr. Janice Blythe Youth Award**

- The group discussed community awards information that had been sent out a few weeks earlier.
 - The deadline has been moved to October, with awards presented at the November city council meeting.
 - This timeline allows distribution to schools and churches in August.
 - Award plaques need to be updated.
 - One award name was changed from the John G. Fee Award to the Dr. Janice Blythe Youth Award.
 - The website needs updates to:
 - Add "Dr." to Janice Blythe's name
 - Replace the old "John G. Fee" award name in the online application.
 - The group will decide at the July meeting whether to add "Social Justice" to the youth award title after reviewing all materials.
 - Heather Johnson will resend the community awards documents for review.
 - Finalize community awards descriptions and update the application at the July meeting.

- **Community Awareness Events**

- The commission discussed organizing a city-wide workshop on scam prevention and identity theft, particularly targeting elderly residents.
 - The community center is available on September 5, 12, and 26.
 - The cost is \$200 for four hours.
 - A morning event may not be ideal because of farmer's market traffic.
 - September 26 conflicts with Berea Homecoming and the Berea Home Village fundraiser, making it unsuitable.
 - September 12 was proposed as a potential date, even though Felecia Ballard will be absent, and the group agreed the event could proceed.
 - The group discussed whether HRC should sponsor the event alone or partner with other organizations.
 - There was a suggestion to involve Berea Tourism and Nancy Conley,
 - Possibly waive the \$200 fee because this is a City of Berea venue
 - The goal is to present the event as a city-wide initiative.
 - Potential sponsors and participants include:
 - Central Bank.
 - State Farm owned by Craig Loftis.
 - Law enforcement.
 - Other insurance companies.
 - Area Agency on Aging.
 - Senior Center.
 - Katie Hegseth at Berea Home Village.
 - Kristy Napier from Central Bank was identified as a key contact. She may know a national speaker on the topic who lives nearby.

- Susie Harris will contact Kristy Napier to begin scheduling the event.
 - Susie Harris will contact the community center to book September 12, 2026, for the scam prevention workshop
 - Susie Harris to provide an event planning progress report at the next meeting.
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VI. New Business

- **Discrimination Review Request**

- The commission reviewed an email requesting that they:
 - Examine a city ordinance.
 - Recommend changes to city council.
 - Hold a community forum.
 - The complaint alleges gender discrimination in city public nudity ordinances.
 - The group expressed doubt that the issue falls under the commission's purview.
 - Felecia Ballard attempted to contact Sean Sandlin, City Manager, to discuss the matter and determine which city department handles ordinances.
 - Existing ordinances regarding nudity, including those related to alcohol service and city property, did not appear to be gender-specific.
 - The group was concerned that the issue could be contentious or intended to create chaos or make the commission look bad.
 - The commission agreed to treat the request respectfully and follow official procedures.
 - The issue of public toplessness was recognized as a real topic being addressed in other cities, including Oklahoma City and New York City.
 - The commission decided not to hold a community forum.
 - The matter will be referred to the City, as well as possibly Juan Pena, at the KY Human Rights Commission, for advice and Sean Sandlin as City Manager.
 - A brief formal response will be sent to the person who submitted the request, stating that it has been received and is under review.
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VII. Announcements

- **No Announcements**
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VIII. Comments

- Sharyn Mitchell complimented the Commission on the Juneteenth event and expressed excitement over future activities.
- Doug Martin informed the Commission that Sharyn gave a great presentation at Ignite Academy

IX. Adjournment

- Motion: Susie Harris moved to adjourn. Motion Seconded. Motion Carried.
 - Meeting adjourned at 7:36 p.m.
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Approved by: Felecia J. Ballard
Felecia Ballard, BHRC Chair

Prepared by: Heather H. Johnson
Heather Johnson, BHRC Secretary/Treasurer