



Township of Montclair 205 Claremont Avenue Montclair, NJ



Civil Rights Commission
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MINUTES OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION
September 18, 2025

ORDER: The meeting was called to order at **7:12 p.m.** by Ravi Srinivasan, Chair. Ravi Srinivasan, Chair, had arranged with Matthew Amaral, Township Communications Director, to have posted on the Township website.

Roll Call:

Commissioners Present	Ravi Srinivasan (Chair), Matthew Frankel, Sol Demefack, Joni Cohen, Reubena Spence, Madeline Gale, Yvonne Bouknight, Leslie Brown, Leonore Dickinson
Commissioners Absent	Kevin Allen, Matilda Carvajal, Nelson Campbell, Kevin Pierre, Council Liaison Mayor Renee Baskerville
Other Parties in Attendance	Alicia Dawkins (HR Director/Affirmative Action Officer)

Per Township website: There are currently 4 generic open vacancies / appointments for the CRC, and the MSU appointee position is also open.

Meeting notice was provided on [Meeting Dates Township of Montclair, NJ \(montclairnjusa.org\)](https://montclairnjusa.org) as well as filed with the Township Clerk. Civil Rights Commission activities also listed in Montclair Local (Internet only news site) with link to Township site for meeting dates: [Montclair Civil Rights Commission: Come Be Part of Change - Montclair Local](#).

Public Comments Section

The Chair, Ravi Srinivasan, confirmed the meeting procedures include an allocated slot for public comment and that the public portion of the meeting is being recorded. The Chair noted that there were **no public commenters** present at the meeting.

Public Session of CRC meeting

Adoption of Minutes



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The minutes from the prior July meeting were adopted, subject to one amendment to correct the record that Joni Cohen was present, rather than absent, as originally drafted.

CRC Structure and Operations

Chair Ravi Srinivasan is acting as Secretary due to Jennifer Otero's recent resignation. He confirmed the meeting was being recorded under the New Jersey Open Meetings Act. The Chair mentioned efforts to automate minutes generation using an AI agent based on the recording. The CRC serves as an **advisory commission** to the Town Council and does not have enforcement capabilities, judicial powers, or the authority to make terminations or arrests.

Presentation and Discussion with Alicia Dawkins (HR/Affirmative Action)

Alicia Dawkins, Montclair Township Human Resources, discussed her dual role covering HR duties (recruiting, hiring, termination, promotions, employee relations) and Affirmative Action, noting the functions **"both go hand in hand"**.

- * Ms. Dawkins continually monitors demographics, promotions, and hiring practices.
- * She implemented **annual Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) training** for township employees, noting this training did not exist prior to her arrival.
- * To mitigate bias in hiring, she implemented **blind hiring** for resumes, removing identifiers such as applicant name, address, and college graduation year.
- * She reported that out of 13 recent hires, **85% were minorities**.
- * Ms. Dawkins addresses managers who are "not open to diversity" directly and involves the Township Manager to "provide guidance and keep us out of trouble and legal [issues]".
- * She noted challenges in recruitment for technical roles like **mechanics and engineers**, due to younger generations preferring jobs that may offer remote work, unlike government positions.
- * She confirmed the Township runs a college internship program and uses job shadowing. The **Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity (EO4) report** is prepared every two years.
- * Ms. Dawkins requested a proactive partnership, asking the CRC to share any concerns they may be hearing.



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- * The idea of the CRC assisting in recruiting younger talent (via a potential high school internship/apprentice program) was discussed.

Commissioner Leslie Brown Shares Hate Incident

Commissioner Leslie Brown reported a personal hate incident that occurred in July in her residential building (Bellclair on Bell Street).

- * A white male resident used a **racial slur** against her as the elevator doors closed.
- * She filed a **police report**. Detective Feliz investigated and identified the perpetrator via key fob records, but the resident refused to respond to police inquiries.
- * She reported that the elevator security camera was **non-functional**.
- * A prosecutor's office representative informed her that **hate crimes can fall under protected free speech**, citing a Supreme Court case.
- * Commissioners advised seeking legal recourse against the residential building due to the lack of security and feeling unsafe.

Administrative Follow-up Items

- * **Secretary Position:** Jennifer Otero resigned, and the role remains open.
- * **Minutes Technology:** The need for a dedicated CRC Zoom account to utilize transcription services was raised. **Matthew Frankel** volunteered to follow up with the Town Manager/IT department on this request.
- * **Upcoming Guest Speakers:** The Superintendent is targeted for the November meeting. Madeline Gale volunteered to contact NAACP President Diane Anglin to request her attendance in October.
- * **Vacancies:** Four generic open commissioner slots and the MSU appointee seat are open. The High School Liaison position (Sol Demefack) requires renewal (expired June 2025). The Chair will follow up with the Mayor regarding pending appointments.
- * **Anti-semitism / anti-racism training Follow-up:** The Town Council has not yet acted on the CRC's recommendations regarding **anti-bias/anti-racism training**, which has been pending for



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nearly a year. The Chair, Ravi Srinivasan, was invited to a prior Human Services meeting on 9/10 but was unable to stay through the end of this meeting. This topic will need to be raised at a future Human Services meeting. Ravi will follow up with two Township residents (Josh Katz and Lani Sommer-Padilla) on the matter.

* **Business Cards:** Discussion continued regarding finalizing business cards, including adding a QR code and addressing the best printer options (local business vs. Vista Print/Staples).

* **Information Sharing Protocol:** Discussion ensued on whether to create a separate thread for articles to avoid overwhelming the general discussion group.

* **NAACP/BOE Forum:** Madeline Gale proposed the CRC co-sponsor a Board of Education candidate forum with the NAACP and PTAC. Conceptual consensus was reached.

Executive Session of CRC meeting

None. The meeting concluded after the discussion of Commissioner Leslie Brown's incident.

Action Items and Responsible Parties:

| Item | Responsible Party |

| **Adoption of Minutes** | July minutes adopted subject to one attendance amendment. |

| **Zoom Account Access** | **Matthew Frankel** to follow up with IT/Town Manager regarding obtaining a dedicated CRC Zoom account. |

| **October Speaker (NAACP)** | Madeline Gale to contact NAACP President Diane Anglin to request attendance in October. |

| **New Commissioner Appointments** | Ravi Srinivasan to follow up with the Mayor on the status of the four open commissioner slots. |

| **Student Liaison Status** | Ravi Srinivasan to follow up on the MHS liaison renewal. **Matthew Frankel** to follow up on the MSU appointee status. |

| **Anti-semitism / anti-racism training Follow-up** | Ravi Srinivasan to follow up with the Mayor/advocates (Josh Katz/Lonnie) regarding the status of **anti-bias/anti-racism training** recommendations. |

| **Proactive HR Partnership** | Leslie Brown designated to coordinate assembling additional questions for the HR Director (Alicia Dawkins). |



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| **CRC Annual Reports** | Ravi Srinivasan to share CRC annual reports (2021-2024) with Alicia Dawkins. |

| **Business Cards** | Commissioners (previously Leonore Dickinson, now Reubena Spence) to continue efforts to determine vendor/price for 500 business cards with QR code. |

| **NAACP/BOE Forum** | Madeline Gale to follow up to obtain formal details regarding the co-sponsorship of the BOE candidate forum. |

| **Hate incident reported by Leslie Brown** | Leslie Brown to advise on next steps for CRC / informing landlord. |