



Civil Rights Commission | 205 Claremont Ave | Montclair, NJ 07042 | tel: +1.973.307.0366 | civilrightscommission@montclairnjusa.org



MINUTES OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION

4/16/26

ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 1907

Roll Call:

Commissioners Present	Ravi Srinivasan (Chair) Leslie Brown (Treasurer) Leonore Dickinson Madeline Gale Reubena Spence Joni Cohen Matilda Carvajal (Vice Chair) Sol Demefack Marcia Almeida
Liaisons	Renee Baskerville (Town Council) Yvonne Bouknight (Board of Ed)
Guests	Dana Williams Jackson (Guest, Chair of Clifton Advisory Committee on Civil Rights)

Commissioners Absent	Kevin Allen, Matthew Frankel
Liaisons Absent	Alisha Dawkins (HR)

Per Township website: There currently continue to be 4 generic open vacancies / appointments for the CRC, and the MSU appointee and Town Council alternate position is also open.

Meeting notice was provided on [Meeting Dates Township of Montclair, NJ \(montclairnjusa.org\)](#) 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](#).

Meeting Opening and Minutes Adoption

The meeting was called to order at 19:07 by Chair Ravi Srinivasan

. The minutes from the March 19th meeting were approved

. Mayor Baskerville suggested exploring whether the Township liaison, Alicia Dawkins, could act as the note-taker/secretary for the commission, complementing the current process of using automated AI tools for minute generation

Presentation by Clifton Advisory Committee Chair



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Dana Williams Jackson introduced herself as the Chair of the Clifton Advisory Committee on Civil Rights

- . She explained that their committee, formed in 2023, consists of 32 members to represent 16 districts
- . She shared insights into their operations, including their use of subcommittees (e.g., legislative affairs, data and policy)
- . The two commissions exchanged best practices regarding handling public comments, addressing hate incidents (such as hakenkreuz graffiti in Clifton), passing anti-hate resolutions, and initiating proactive cultural and holiday celebrations on social media to build community tolerance

Statewide CRC Networking

Following up on previous efforts, the CRC is attempting to develop a repository of all civil rights commissions across New Jersey municipalities

- . Chair Srinivasan noted that the CRC will wait for Alisha Dawkins to gather responses from her statewide HR network before deciding on the next steps, which may include hosting a joint virtual roundtable to share data and best practices

Town Council Appointments to CRC

The Commission discussed ongoing delays with the Town Council in filling four open general slots, the open Montclair State University (MSU) appointee position, and the Town Council alternate liaison

- . The official Township Clerk's roster remains outdated, incorrectly listing resigned members like Sheila Boyd while missing newly appointed members like Marcia Almeida
- . Four new volunteer interest forms have been submitted by residents; the Town Council will review
- . Matthew Frankel will be asked to re-engage with MSU leadership to recruit a new student appointee starting in September
- . Sol Demefack noted that his term as the High School Liaison ends in June and Yvonne will follow up with the school principal

Immigrant Rights and Security Panel (proposed date of April 20th)

Commissioner Kevin Pierre led the final planning for the "Immigrant Rights" panel scheduled for Monday, April 20th at 7:00 PM in the municipal building

. The panelists will include Rev. Anya, Larry Hamm, Ravi Ragbir, and Sol Demefack, with Diane Anglin serving as moderator; refinements to the questions will be processed:

- Rephrasing Question 5: A commissioner pointed out that reading the question exactly as written was awkward and suggested substituting the phrase "Judicial system" to make it read more smoothly

- **Typographical Correction:** The commission noted a spelling error caused by autocorrect and agreed to change the word "pantalet" back to "panelist"
 - **Implementation of Time Limits:** To get through the 9 questions within the allotted time, the commission decided that the moderator should instruct the panelists to keep their responses to three minutes per question
 - **Targeting Questions by Expertise:** The commission clarified that not every panelist would be expected to answer every single question; instead, specific questions will be catered toward the individual panelists who have the most relevant expertise to answer them
 - **Commissioner Leonore Dickinson** brought up the importance of including non-immigrant issues in the April 20th panel discussion. Specifically, she suggested addressing the rights of allies, family members, and people who are mistakenly targeted by ICE, noting that Montclair has a large non-immigrant population that also needs to know their rights to help immigrants. The commission agreed to try and weave this topic into the event, and Leonore was asked to write her constructed question and put it in the group chat so it could be incorporated
- . The event will be recorded by TV34 and available on YouTube
- . To protect audience anonymity during the Q&A, students will distribute and collect index cards for written questions rather than having attendees speak on camera
- . Logistics including purchasing snacks (cookies/pretzels), printing "Know Your Rights" cards, and providing Spanish translation assistance

CRC Charter Review and Operations

The commission reviewed an internal ideation doc created by Chair Srinivasan containing proposed modernizations to the CRC's originating ordinance/charter

. Still in the "ideation stage," the proposed changes include establishing formal mediation and conflict resolution processes, tracking complaints, and setting a community engagement mandate

. The group also discussed how to maintain confidentiality for sensitive complaints under the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act, suggesting the intake form be modified to allow complainants to opt for a pseudonym during public deliberations and for confidentiality to be addressed in the intake form

Action Items and Responsible Parties

Item	Responsible Party
Secretary Duties	Ravi Srinivasan: Explore with Alisha Dawkins if she can formally act as the CRC secretary to take notes.
Statewide Networking	Ravi Srinivasan / Matilda Carvajal: Follow up with Alisha Dawkins on the results of the statewide municipal HR inquiry.
MSU Appointee Recruitment	Matthew Frankel: Re-engage MSU leadership to recruit a new university student appointee.
Township Clerk Roster	Ravi Srinivasan: Continue to follow up with the Township Clerk to correct the official commission roster (remove Sheila Boyd, add Marcia Almeida) + add mayor and investigate who the Town Council alternate is.
High School Liaison Renewal	Sol Demefack: Follow up with the Superintendent and Principal Freeman regarding his term expiring in June.
April 20th Event Logistics	Leslie Brown: Purchase event snacks (cookies/chips/water) and submit receipts.
April 20th Event Setup	All Commissioners: Arrive at 6:30 PM on Monday, April 20th to assist with tables and setup.
Charter Modernization Review	All Commissioners: Review the working ideation doc and add comments or edits regarding the proposed updates to the CRC ordinance.
Non-immigrant rights questions	Leonore Dickinson