



City of La Crosse, Wisconsin

City Hall
400 La Crosse Street
La Crosse, WI 54601

Meeting Minutes

Human Rights Commission

Wednesday, November 13, 2024

5:15 PM

Grandad Room

Call to Order

Littlejohn called the meeting to order at 5:31 PM.

Roll Call

Present: 5 - Tracy Littlejohn, A Xiong, Mac Kiel, Gretchen Guinn Paquette, Claire Bakalars

Approval of Minutes

Bakalars motioned to approve the minutes, Paquette seconded. The motion carried by acclamation.

Notices and Discussion

Agenda Items:

- 1 [24-0079](#) Monthly Updates From REACH, DEI Committee, and Homelessness Coordinator

 Attachments: [Monthly Pathways Update](#)

 REACH's rezoning petition will go before the Common Council on Thursday 11/14. Here is the link to the REACH report released for our 3rd Anniversary in October: https://reachcenterlacrosse.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/REACH_Impact_Report_FINAL.pdf

 The DEI team continued discussion of the results of their survey and determined:
 - New employees are looking for more follow up/communication after the onboarding process. Our goal is to compile a resource sheet for new employees which will include a list of "go to" people for each department for finding out information/getting questions answered. We would also like to start a mentorship program and include that as part of the new hire checklist being created in the HR department. A follow up/check in for new hires outside of the probationary evaluation process should be considered. Tours for all new staff should take place.
 - Employees are wanting to be informed of what is going on in the City and about upcoming events. We will continue to distribute the quarterly newsletter.
 - The City should do a better job at welcoming new employees, especially those who have moved to the area for employment purposes. We have started utilizing the First Friends program with the La Crosse Chamber for employees who are new to the area.

They provide tours of the La Crosse community, as well as share resources and help make connections.

- The City lacks in diversity candidates/a diverse upper management. We need to review things like our job postings, application questions, interview questions, etc. to discover what barriers we have in place for attracting diverse applicants. Materials may be outdated. Additionally, we need to look at our lack of outreach to diverse groups within our community regarding job opportunities. Offering more tours of facilities may be beneficial.

- Employees would like to have more say in handbook policy changes. Gathering input from employees prior to making handbook changes for the following year should start taking place. This was previously done through a survey distributed from the HR Director, which provided beneficial feedback and ideas.

They are starting the process of working on a resource sheet for incoming employees.

Pathways Home update:

• 24 people on the Pathways to Housing list were housed in October—thank you Pathways Conferencing participants and our community network! Our current focus is on people who have lower barriers to housing and people who have been experiencing homelessness for fewer than six months.

• The Pathways Home team reviewed and scored 9 Specialized Housing Proposals. Our funding recommendation was provided to the Economic and Community Development Commission and the La Crosse City Council for the final award decision.

• The 2025 budget for La Crosse County proposes adding 3 additional social workers and 3 peer support specialists to help people coming from homelessness find and maintain housing and support services.

• Congratulations to the REACH Center for 3 years of community service! The REACH Center is a key entry point in our system to connect unsheltered individuals and families to case management, shelter or housing, and other resources tailored to their specific needs.

2 [24-0797](#)

Discussion on outreach opportunities

Attachments: [A Quick Guide to Renting in La Crosse \(English\)](#)

Staff received sample procedures from Board of Zoning Appeals on which to base Human Rights Commission procedures. That procedures document can then be used for a brochure. Existing renter brochures could be updated to include information about emotional support animals, or a new resource could be shared or created. There could also be a resource that includes generalized examples of past complaints.

3 [22-1024](#)

Discussion on housing as a human right.

Attachments: [The Right to Adequate Housing - Training Module](#)
[What Does the 'Human Right to Adequate Housing' Mean?](#)
[Cities for Adequate Housing Declaration](#)
[Toronto Housing Charter – Opportunity for All](#)
[City of Madison - Housing as a Human Right Resolution](#)

Paquette sent notes on resolution. The resolution needs to be clear about requirements and implications. Kiel thought the resolution could look like an empty

gesture following the camping ban; is it still relevant to for Pathways Home. Staff shared factors considered in editing the resolution. The City did not adopt the Pathways Home; what formal commitment does the City have to enact it? The resolution could support the plan.

Commission suggested inviting Dillon Mader to speak about how the HRC could support Project Proven's efforts. Pathways Home team could speak to HRC about how it can help.

Paquette motioned to refer the resolution to Pathways Home for direction on how the HRC can help, seconded by Xiong. The motion carried by a voice vote.

4 [23-1489](#)

Discussion on adding "homeless status" to protected classes.

Attachments: [Municipal Code Reference on Human Rights Declaration of Policy](#)
[Kevin Hundt Email - 7.9.2024](#)
[Jessica Olson Email - 8.8.2024](#)
[Draft Ordinance \(Nov 24\)](#)

The commission recommended going to Pathways Home with this as well.

Next Meeting / Agenda Items

Adjournment

Littlejohn adjourned the meeting at 6:11 PM.

Notice is further given that members of other governmental bodies may be present at the above scheduled meeting to gather information about a subject over which they have decision-making responsibility.

NOTICE TO PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY

Requests from persons with a disability who need assistance to participate in this meeting should call the City Clerk's office at (608) 789-7510 or send an email to ADAcityclerk@cityoflacrosse.org, with as much advance notice as possible.