

## Onondaga County/Syracuse Commission on Human Rights

John H. Mulroy Civic Center  
11th Floor East  
421 Montgomery Street  
Syracuse, NY 13202  
(315) 435-3565

### 2023 Human Rights Commission Meeting Dates

Date	Location	Notes
January 18	In-person	
February 15	In-person	
March 15	<i>*No meeting*</i>	
April 19	In-person	
May 17	In-person	
June 21	In-person	
July - No Meeting	<i>No meeting in July</i>	
August 16	In-person	
September 20	<i>*No meeting*</i>	
October 18	In-person	
November 15	In-person	*Meeting cancelled*
December 20	In-person	



County of Onondaga  
**Office of Diversity and Inclusion**

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[www.ongov.net](http://www.ongov.net)

J. Ryan McMahon, II  
*County Executive*

Monica Williams  
*Chief Diversity Officer*

## **HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MINUTES**

JANUARY 18, 2023 HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MEETING

**\*\*\*Draft: pending approval\*\*\***

**MEMBERS:**

<b>P_Hassina Adams</b>	<b>P_Agnes McCray</b>
<b>P_Bishop H. Bernard Alex</b>	<b>X_Liban Mohammed</b>
<b>X_Mbonimpa Banabas</b>	<b>X_Al-amin Muhammad</b>
<b>P_Rev. Roosevelt Baums</b>	<b>P_Liam O'Connor</b>
<b>P_Rasheada Caldwell (Chair)</b>	<b>X_Lauren Rosenstein</b>
<b>X_Chris Gilkes</b>	<b>X_Nodesia Hernandez</b>
<b>P_Leo Sanchez</b>	
<b>_Mia Wade</b>	

**Commissioners Absent:** Chris Gilkes, Nodesia Hernandez, Liban Mohammed, Al-amin Muhammad, Mbonimpa Banabas, Lauren Rosenstein

**County staff:** CDO Monica Williams, Exec. Director HR Montanette Murphy, and Human Rights Specialist Johanna Sellers

**Opening:** Meeting began at 5:40

### **Greetings and Welcome**

Executive Director of Human Rights Montanette Murphy welcomes the commissioners and county staff. No community members were present.

### **Moment of Silence for Brexiale Torres-Ortiz**

Chief Diversity Officer Monica Williams discussed what we need to do as a community to stand against gun violence and led us into a moment of silence for 11-year-old Brexiale Torres-Ortiz who lost her life recently to gun violence.

### **Chair's Report**

Chair Rasheada Caldwell asked the commission how do we fight gun violence and spoke about what we need to do as a community. Chair Rasheada Caldwell discussed mental health and the impact it has on our society. Chair Rasheada Caldwell asked the commission how they would feel about streaming their meetings live and creating a social media platform for the HRC.

**Administrator's Report**

Executive Director of Human Rights Montanette Murphy announces that the committee will vote in February on a new Chair person. If any commissioners are interested in being the Chair person, please let Montanette know.

We will discuss the HRC mission statement at next month's meeting.

**New Business**

None.

**Old Business**

Commissioner Hassina Adams suggested the commissioners have a group chat or some form of communication among one another. Commissioner Liam O'Connor discussed how the committee can't move forward until there is a quorum at the meetings. Then decisions can be made.

**Discussion:**

Commissioners discussed gun violence in our community and what the commission can do to help stop it. The commission also discussed out country's mental health crisis and how it effects our community.

**Meeting ended at 6:54 p.m.**

*Minutes submitted by Human Rights Specialist Johanna Sellers on January 18, 2023.*



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## **HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MINUTES**

FEBRUARY 15, 2023 ONONDAGA COUNTY/SYRACUSE HRC MEETING

**\*\*\*\*Draft: pending approval\*\*\*\***

**MEMBERS:**

<b>X_Hassina Adams</b>	<b>P_Agnes McCray</b>
<b>P_Bishop H. Bernard Alex</b>	<b>X_Liban Mohammed</b>
<b>X_Mbonimpa Banabas</b>	<b>X_Al-amin Muhammad</b>
<b>P_Rev. Roosevelt Baums</b>	<b>P_Liam O'Connor</b>
<b>P_Rasheada Caldwell (Chair)</b>	<b>P_Lauren Rosenstein</b>
<b>P_Chris Gilkes</b>	<b>P_Nodesia Hernandez</b>
<b>X_Leo Sanchez</b>	
<b>P_Mia Wade</b>	

**Commissioners Absent:** Hassina Adams, Mbonimpa Banabas, Liban Mohammed, Al-amin Muhammad, Leo Sanchez

**County staff:** CDO Monica Williams, Exec. Director HR Montanette Murphy

**Opening:** Meeting began at 5:38

### **Introduction and Welcome**

Executive Director of Human Rights Montanette Murphy welcomes the commissioners and county staff. Welcomed community members Shwani Shaho and Roland Carlisle.

### **Chair's Report**

- Chair Rasheada Caldwell announced upcoming events, including one for all community members. Care Share money to pay National Grid is available to everyone, regardless of income. Interested parties can apply for aid on March 15 between 11a-3p at the Salt City Market.
- Youth Job Fair set for March 16 at the Salt City Market. Gift cards will be handed out to 16-year-olds to encourage them to apply for jobs and work. Jobs are available for youth at local parks and the Syracuse City School District. There is a new executive director at CNY Works.

### **Administrator's Report**

Commission is still in need of members. After the Admin report, Commissioners discussed maintaining a reliable quorum for meetings, including conducting hybrid meetings for Commissioners and livestreaming the meetings for the general public. ODI will look into virtual meetings or allowing Commissioners to join the meeting by phone.

### **Old Business**

Commissioners decided to discuss looking at and possibly revamping the Mission Statement once the group has a quorum to make any (changes) additions or deletions.

### **Discussion:**

Commissioners discussed how to have a voice in the community on matters without a quorum. ODI will invite HRC attorney Pam Romeo to the April 19<sup>th</sup> meeting.

### **Meeting ended at 7 p.m.**

*Minutes submitted by Montanette Murphy on February 21, 2023.*



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## **HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MINUTES**

April 19, 2023 ONONDAGA COUNTY/SYRACUSE HRC MEETING

**\*\*\*Draft: pending approval\*\*\***

**MEMBERS:**

<b>X_Hassina Adams</b>	<b>X_Chris Gilkes</b>
<b>P_Bishop H. Bernard Alex</b>	<b>P_Nodesia Hernandez</b>
<b>P_Samia Al-Fareh</b>	<b>P_Agnes McCray</b>
<b>P_Mbonimpa Banabas</b>	<b>P_Liam O'Connor</b>
<b>X_Rev. Roosevelt Baums</b>	<b>P_Lauren Rosenstein</b>
<b>X_Rasheada Caldwell (Chair)</b>	<b>P_Leo Sanchez</b>
<b>P_Mia Wade</b>	

**Absent:** Hassina Adams, Rev. Roosevelt Baums, Rasheada Caldwell, Chris Gilkes.

**County staff present:** CDO Monica Williams, Exec. Dir. of HR Montanette Murphy, Human Rights Specialist Johanna Sellers and County Attorney Pam Romeo.

**Opening:** Meeting began at 5:36

**Introduction and Welcome:** Office of Diversity and Inclusion staff, Commissioners, Law Department all introduced themselves. New Commissioner Samia Al-Fareh was introduced. Community members Alesha Jordan, Melissa Ellingworth, Onondaga County Legislator Mary Kuhn, Sora Iriye and Shaho Shwani were recognized, but no public comments were allowed.

**Chair's Report:** None.

**Administrator's Report:** Montanette urged Commissioners who have concerns or issues relating to the functioning of the Human Rights Commission to bring those issues and concerns to the attention of the Commission first and then allow Commissioners to determine the next plan of action as a group.

**New Business:** Discussion of J-E school board meeting video. Melissa Ellingworth and Alesha Jordan spoke to the Commission and community about their sons' racist experiences within the Jordan-Elbridge school district. Ellingworth and Jordan are seeking advocacy. The Commission plans to write a letter to the J-E school board about the racist incidents and also attend the April 26, 2023, J-E school board meeting.

**Meeting ended at 7:15 p.m.**

*Minutes submitted by Montanette Murphy on April 21, 2023.*



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## **HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MINUTES**

May 17, 2023 ONONDAGA COUNTY/SYRACUSE HRC MEETING

**\*\*\*Draft: pending approval\*\*\***

**MEMBERS:**

<b>P_ Hassina Adams</b>	<b>_Chris Gilkes</b>
<b>_Bishop H. Bernard Alex</b>	<b>_Nodesia Hernandez</b>
<b>_Samia Al-Fareh</b>	<b>P_Agnes McCray</b>
<b>_Mbonimpa Banabas</b>	<b>P_Liam O'Connor</b>
<b>_Rev. Roosevelt Baums</b>	<b>P_Lauren Rosenstein</b>
<b>P_Rasheada Caldwell (Chair)</b>	<b>_Leo Sanchez</b>
<b>_Mia Wade</b>	

**Absent:** Bishop H. Bernard Alex, Samia Al-Fareh, Mbonimpa Banabas, Rev. Roosevelt Baums, Chris Gilkes, Nodesia Hernandez, Leo Sanchez and Mia Wade.

**County staff present:** CDO Monica Williams, Exec. Dir. of HR Montanette Murphy, Human Rights Specialist Johanna Sellers.

**Opening:** Meeting began at 5:35 – Meeting is being recording via Zoom.

**Introduction and Welcome:** Montanette Murphy introduced the Office of Diversity staff and the allowed the Commissioners to introduce themselves and speak. Audience members were also given the opportunity to introduce themselves.

**Chair's Report:** None.

**Administrator's Report:** Montanette gave an update on the May 10, 2023 NYS Division of Human Rights Hate and Bias Prevention Summit at John Jay College. Alerted individuals about the Friday, May 19<sup>th</sup> collaborative forum hosted by the Onondaga County/Syracuse Human Rights Commission, FOCUS Greater Syracuse and the NYSDHR.

**Discussion:** Commissioners discussed the letter sent to the J-E School Board and the superintendent's reply. Commissioners considered attending the June 7<sup>th</sup> J-E School Board meeting.

**Meeting ended at 6:20 p.m.**

*Minutes submitted by Montanette Murphy on May 18, 2023.*



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## **HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MINUTES**

June 21, 2023 ONONDAGA COUNTY/SYRACUSE HRC MEETING

**\*\*\*Draft: pending approval\*\*\***

### **COMMISSIONERS:**

<b>_Hassina Adams</b>	<b>_Paul Harvey</b>
<b>_Bishop H. Bernard Alex</b>	<b>_Agnes McCray</b>
<b>_Samia Al-Fareh</b>	<b>_Liam O'Connor</b>
<b>_Mbonimpa Banabas</b>	<b>_Lauren Rosenstein</b>
<b>_Rev. Roosevelt Baums</b>	<b>_Leo Sanchez</b>
<b>_Rasheada Caldwell (Chair)</b>	<b>_Ryan Smith</b>
<b>_Chris Gilkes</b>	<b>_Mia Wade</b>

**Absent:** Samia Al-Fareh, Mbonimpa Banabas, Chairperson Rasheada Caldwell, Chris Gilkes, and Leo Sanchez.

**County staff present:** CDO Monica Williams, Exec. Dir. of HR Montanette Murphy, Human Rights Specialist Johanna Sellers.

**Opening:** Meeting began at 5:35 – Meeting is being recording via Zoom.

**Introduction and Welcome:** Montanette Murphy introduced Office of Diversity staff; Commissioners then introduced themselves, including the two new Commissioners Ryan Smith and Paul Harvey. Public: no one. Meeting took place in Literacy Room because of early voting in the library's auditorium.

**Chair's Report:** None

**Administrator's Report:** Pride parade on August 25 at the State Fair. Commissioners encouraged to attend. National Night Out set for August 1, 2023. Lauren inquired about the FOCUS Greater Syracuse forum.

**Discussion:** Commissioners discussed the realistic expectations of what the school district can and will do concerning the incident with the two young black students. The Commission agreed to send a letter to the school board, no later than July 5<sup>th</sup>, responding to the school board's May 4<sup>th</sup> letter to the HRC. The Commission will give an August 10<sup>th</sup> deadline for the school board to respond, which will be before the HRC's August 16<sup>th</sup> meeting. Commissioner McCray wants our office to check with Pam Romeo and Law to find out what to do if Jordan-Elbridge only gives



the Commission tidbits of their progress towards Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. Agnes wants legal counsel to figure out what recourse we have or if they don't respond the way that Commissioners want. Commissioner Alex asked if the HRC can seek outside counsel. CDO Monica Williams responded yes. Monica wants to discuss what hiring outside counsel would involve and also retaining a lawyer. ODI will follow up with HRC Law person Pam Romeo. HRC Local Law states that Commission can hire a lawyer – but how does the Commission do that, is there a bidding process? It was also discussed to keep the Jordan-Elbridge parents in the loop about everything that is going on with the School Board and HRC. It was also noted that the parents who brought the complaint to the HRC should write a note stating that they asked the Commission for help and advocacy regarding the racist incidents their sons experienced. Commissioners also said that they want plain language of the DASA (Dignity for All Students Act) law and the code of conduct.

- Also, Montanette had a separate conversation with Commissioner McCray about creating business cards with QR codes on them; and hosting an event at the Boys & Girls Club with Commissioner Chris Gilkes.

**Meeting ended at 6:40 p.m.**

*Minutes submitted by Montanette Murphy on June 22, 2023.*



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## **HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MINUTES**

August 16, 2023 ONONDAGA COUNTY/SYRACUSE HRC MEETING

**\*\*\*Draft: pending approval\*\*\***

### **COMMISSIONERS:**

<b>_Hassina Adams</b>	<b>_Paul Harvey</b>
<b>_Bishop H. Bernard Alex</b>	<b>_Agnes McCray</b>
<b>_Samia Al-Fareh</b>	<b>_Liam O'Connor</b>
<b>_Mbonimpa Banabas</b>	<b>_Lauren Rosenstein</b>
<b>_Rev. Roosevelt Baums</b>	<b>_Leo Sanchez</b>
<b>_Rasheada Caldwell (Chair)</b>	<b>_Ryan Smith</b>
<b>_Chris Gilkes</b>	<b>_Mia Wade</b>

**Absent:** Mbonimpa Banabas, Chairperson Rasheada Caldwell, Chris Gilkes, Lauren Rosenstein, Leo Sanchez and Ryan Smith.

**Virtually:** Hassina Adams, Samia Al-Fareh, Liam O'Connor and Mia Wade.

**In-Person:** Bishop H. Bernard Alex, Rev. Roosevelt Baums, Paul Harvey and Agnes McCray.

**County staff present:** CDO Monica Williams and Exec. Dir. of HR Montanette Murphy

**Community Members present:** Jackie LaSonde, Alphonso Davis, Anni Bellows.

**Opening:** Meeting began at 5:40 – Meeting was in-person and also held via Zoom.

**Introductions and Welcome:** Montanette Murphy ODI office and Chief Diversity Officer Monica Williams.

**Chair's Report:** None – No report submitted by Chairperson Rasheada Caldwell.

### **Administrator's Report:**

- ODI office will begin interviewing for a new Human Rights Specialist; Johanna Sellers resigned July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023.
- Dina Montes, Communication Specialist, from the NYS Division of Human Rights invited Onondaga County Human Rights Commissioners to join the state DHR at Great New York State Fair Booth.
- Division of Human Rights asks whether the Onondaga County/Syracuse HRC has a youth initiative.
- Pride Parade at the State Fair. Who's marching? Let our office know.
- Montanette gave a National Night Out round up.

**Discussion: J-E School Board** – Commissioners discussed attending the August 23<sup>rd</sup> school board meeting to emphasize their support for the two J-E students who were racially harassed and mistreated. Commissioners commented on the August 9, 2023 package from Superintendent James Froio and the school board. Included in the package was the contents of the school district’s implicit bias training for administrators and staffers. The package also included the district’s new Code of Character, Conduct and Support in draft form. Mr. Froio stated that the final draft of the Code of Conduct would be completed very soon and in time for the August 23, 2023 public comment period during the J-E school board meeting.

Among the comments from Commissioners:

1. Code of Conduct doesn’t delve into racial bias and racial discrimination. The Code of Conduct should address intersectionality, cultural awareness, disability training, and it should include attainable Diversity, Equity and Inclusion goals.
2. The topic of reaching out to legal counsel again was discussed.
3. Commissioners want to know what steps are being taken by the district to restore and fix the racist encounters and harassment the two students endured.
4. Commissioners were reassured that they are charged and have permission and authority to address such matters as those within the J-E school district.
5. It was decided the Commission would write a follow up letter to the superintendent’s August 9, 2023 letter/package acknowledging that the measures taken by the district addressed the social and emotional injuries to the young students.

**Public Comment period:**

Jackie Lasonde and Alphonso Davis spoke about the number of families who are homeless because of the lead crisis in our community, specifically the city of Syracuse. Lasonde is going to provide the names and properties of those families who need help and Monica will follow up with the county DSS and other officials. Anni Bellows spoke a few minutes about a Food Justice symposium that is set to take place in 2024.

**Meeting ended at 7:05 p.m.**

*Minutes submitted by Montanette Murphy on August 17, 2023.*



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*Chief Diversity Officer*

## **HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES**

December 20, 2023 ONONDAGA COUNTY/SYRACUSE HRC MEETING

**\*Draft meeting minutes: pending approval\***

**\_Hassina Adams**  
**\_Agnes McCray**  
**\_Samia Al-Fareh**  
**\_Liam O'Connor**  
**\_Lauren Rosenstein**  
**\_Leo Sanchez**  
**\_Ryan Smith**

**\_Chris Gilkes**  
**\_Mia Wade**  
**\_Roosevelt Baums**  
**\_Paul Harvey**  
**\_H. Bernard Alex**  
**\_M. Banabas**  
**\_Rasheada C.**

**Absent:** Mbonimpa Banabas, Samia al-Fareh, Rev. Roosevelt Baums, Rasheada Caldwell, Ryan Smith

**Present (in-person):** Hassina Adams, Bishop H. Bernard Alex, Chris Gilkes, Paul Harvey, Agnes McCray, Liam O'Connor, Lauren Rosenstein, Leo Sanchez, Mia Wade

**County staff present:** CDO Monica Williams and Exec. Dir. of HR Montanette Murphy

**Community Members present:** SU Professor Anni Bellows and SU grad student Trinity Benton

**Opening:** Meeting began at 5:40 p.m. – Meeting was in person at Beauchamp Branch Library

**Introductions and Welcome:** Office of Diversity and Inclusion staff – CDO was not in attendance

**Chair's report:** N/A

**Administrator's report:** There will be changes made to the local law governing the Human Rights Commission. Among a few of the changes: making fewer the number of commissioners and attendance. Also discussed electing an HRC chair; Commissioners discussed upcoming events in 2024; Publishing the 2022 Annual Report.

### **Discussion:**

Commissioners would like to meet with J-E officials regarding the racial harassment and bullying of two, young students of color who attend school at J-E CSD. The three dates that were proposed were: 1/17, 1/24, or 1/31. Montanette will contact J-E officials for a date to meet with Commissioners.

**More Discussion:** Commissioners would like to further discuss the content of the meeting with J-E officials. That discussion can take place prior to meeting with J-E officials.

Talking points:

- Data from J-E and the state that can help the Commissioners to assist J-E officials
- Update and discussion of J-E's Diversity Equity and Inclusion manual
- Remediation
- What happens next?
- Commissioners talked about various other subjects and ideas to discuss with J-E officials relating to the school incident.

**Meeting ended at 7 p.m**

*Minutes submitted by Montanette Murphy on December 20, 2023*