



County of Onondaga
Office of Diversity and Inclusion
Onondaga County/Syracuse Human Rights Commission

Monica Williams
CHIEF DIVERSITY OFFICER

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Pending approval - pending approval- pending approval pending

**ONONDAGA COUNTY/CITY OF SYRACUSE
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MEETING**

JANUARY 21, 2026, ONONDAGA COUNTY/SYRACUSE HRC Meeting

****Hybrid Meeting****

- _ **Chairman- H. Bernard Alex** (in person) _ **Adam Leslie** (in person)
- _ **Mary Grace Almandrez** (zoom) _ **Agnes McCray** (via phone)
- _ **Duane L. Reese II** (in person) _ **Paul Harvey** (in person)
- _ **Lauren Rosenstein** (zoom) _ **Lyla Hua** (zoom) (appointed June 18, 2025)
- _ **Taylor McFadden** (in person) (appt. Aug. 21, 2025)

Absent: No one.

Present (in-person): Chairman Alex, Commissioners Reese, Leslie, Harvey, and McFadden.

(online): Commissioners Hua, Rosenstein, Almandrez **(phone):** Commissioner McCray

County staff present: Montanette Rocker, Monica Williams (in person) Anthony Heard (Zoom)

Opening: Meeting began at 5:37 p.m. Chairman Alex opened the meeting with a welcome and recognition of newly joined Commissioner Taylor McFadden.

Welcome and Introduction: Chairman Alex

Community members present: No community members were present in person or online.

Report and updates from ODI administration: Montanette mentioned that the Office of Diversity and Inclusion will begin forwarding some human rights complaints related to landlord/tenant complaints and some employment complaints to the HRC for investigation and response. Monica commented that the Office of Diversity and Inclusion receive phone calls about landlord/tenant rights and employment discrimination and the HRC might be able to assist with some of those complaints.

Introduction of new Commissioner: Taylor McFadden works for the (SHA) Syracuse Housing Authority, and she also has is an alumna of Lemoyne College. She offered comments and answers to questions about ICE being in the city of Syracuse. Commissioner McFadden will send Know Your Rights information to commissioners in an upcoming email.

Questions related to ICE (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement): Commissioner Almandrez asked if the Commission had received any complaints from community members about ICE. Commissioner McFadden and Chairman Alex both responded. Commissioner Almandrez wants to know if there is a way for the HRC to inform the community about ICE or what to do if approached by ICE.

ICE in Syracuse: Syracuse Immigrant and Refugee Defense Network sent Chairman Alex information about ICE being active in the town of DeWitt. The advice from the SIRDN has been for individuals to act with power and not panic, take photos from a distance and be watchful of everything that is happening. Act with power and do not panic. Chairman Alex told a story of an African American woman who is a pastor and who was stopped at a federal building because officials thought she was an undocumented immigrant. Commissioner McFadden will share Know Your Rights material with Commissioners.

ICE and the Faith Community: Commissioner Alex said the HRC should put out a placard educating local houses of worship - synagogues, mosques, churches – about ICE officials being active in our community.

Discussion: The HRC discussed hosting a reading session of the Letter to Birmingham jail with Syracuse City School District students reading parts of the historical document. Chairman Alex will invite Clemmie Harris to speak at or facilitate the reading of MLK's Letter from Birmingham jail. Commissioners would like students to participate in the reading of the "Letter from Birmingham Jail." Commissioners would like to invite students from the Syracuse City School District, Westhill Central School District, Jamesville-DeWitt School District and other districts. The HRC should engage the students in a discussion on civic responsibility and register the students to vote.

Glen Echo Park documentary: Commissioner Adam Leslie and Chief Diversity Officer Monica Williams discussed their viewing of the Civil Rights documentary, which recalls the 1960 protests to integrate Glen Echo Amusement Park "Ain't No Back to a Merry-Go-Round" in the D.C. area. Monica will reach out to the director/producer of Glen Echo Park documentary to see if she is willing to host a discussion about the film.

Black History moments: Commissioner Alex and other native Syracusans discussed living in Syracuse in the 1950s. Discussion centered on F.W. Woolworth Company (store), Suburban Park in Manlius, and C-S Canal Lock 1 (known as Mud Lock).

LGBTQ+ complaint: A community member was surrounded and harassed by a group of hostile men as he walked to the Trexx club. Commissioner Alex shared this information with commissioners.

Tops Supermarket mass shooting: Commissioner Alex said the mother of Roberta Drury, who was killed during the Tops Supermarket mass shooting wants to keep her daughter's memory alive. Commissioner Harvey stated that the trial of the Tops mass shooter Payton Gendron is coming up in 2026.

41st Annual Rev. Dr. MLK Jr. Celebration & Dinner: Lively discussion of the dinner menu served during Syracuse University's MLK Jr. celebration. Commissioner Almandrez said dinner tickets are still available for the MLK dinner. Monica Williams will follow up on available dinner tickets.

Coming up: A section of Grand Avenue in the city of Syracuse will be named after Civil Rights and Disability activist Donna Reese, and the community is welcome to the unveiling. Donna



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Reese's son, Commissioner Duane Reese, II, has invited Commissioners and the public to join him in celebrating the recognition.

Approval of Agendas: Commissioner Harvey motioned to approve the November 2025, December 2025 and January 2026 agendas, with Commissioner Rosenstein seconded. All ayes. No abstentions or nays. Vote approved 9-0.

Approval of Minutes: Commissioner Harvey motioned to approve the September 2025, November 2025 and December 2025 minutes, with Commissioner Reese seconded. All ayes. No abstentions. No nays. Measure approved 9-0.

End of meeting: Commissioner Harvey made a motion to adjourn, and Commissioner Reese seconded. All ayes, 9-0.

Meeting ended at 6:40

Minutes submitted by Montanette Rucker on January 22, 2026