

**State of North Carolina
Office of Administrative Hearings
North Carolina Human Relations Commission**

Meeting Minutes for January 22, 2026

The Human Relations Commission met on Thursday, January 22, 2026. Commissioners attending virtually on Microsoft Teams were Commissioners Chair Nick Byrne (presiding), Sonia Barnes, Paul Norman, and Kerry Wiggins, and Sharon Williams. Commissioners attending by phone were Commissioners Linda Jackson Barnes and Pierre Crawford.

NCOAH staff members present (virtually) were Jonathan Ekblad, Elouise Williams, Ronya Bynum, Pamala Jeffries, Christina Hubbard, and Karin Kirksey Zander.

Call to Order, Prayer, Pledge of Allegiance, Welcoming Remarks

The meeting was called to order at 11:05 a.m. with Chair Nick Byrne presiding. The meeting opened with Prayer and Pledge of Allegiance led by Chair Byrne, and Welcoming Remarks given by Chair Byrne.

Roll Call and Establishment of Quorum

Commissioners attending virtually were noted as well as those who phoned in. No roll call and no quorum.

Approval of Minutes for the August 28, 2025 and October 30, 2025 Meetings

The minutes were not voted on due to no quorum.

PERSONNEL ANNOUNCEMENT

Formal Introduction of New Employees

Investigator Pamala Jeffries and General Counsel Christina Hubbard introduced themselves to the commission. Chair Byrne welcomed them to the staff.

UPDATES AND INFORMATION FROM OAH STAFF

Fair Housing Litigation

General Counsel Christina Hubbard reported on the Elizabeth City conciliation and Moorehead City agreement. Chair Byrne commented on this agenda item. Commissioner Paul Norman requested more specific information on the Moorehead City agreement. Ms. Hubbard reported the information as requested.

NCHRC Staffing Updates

Director Jonathan Ekblad reported on the staffing updates of hiring more hybrid investigator positions amid the budget where the staff would investigate housing and employment cases. The other vacant positions are on hold at this time. Commissioner Kerry Wiggins commented on this agenda item with excitement of the continued work of the staff. Commissioner Sonia Barnes inquired about the number of vacancies that have been vacant for a long period and there is a need to be concerned and pay close attention to those to avoid losing those positions that could be filled because the General Assembly will eliminate those

positions if not filled. Director Ekblad mentioned the Dave Act and plan to fill the vacancy to eliminate the deficit. Chair Byrne commented on this agenda item about the budget and vacancy issues. Commissioner Pierre Crawford commented that the agency should not be penalized for overdue vacancies. Director Ekblad gave more information on this agenda item.

Community Relations Updates

Investigator Ronya Bynum reported on 136 active cases. There are 40 closed cases this year with seven (7) more coming up soon. The goal is 60 cases to close. Ms. Bynum also reported on some fair housing trainings. Ms. Bynum informed the commissioners on the new HUD assignment of cases with HUD ID numbers along with inquiry numbers to all incoming inquiries. Ms. Bynum responded to Commissioner Wiggins' question that was in the chat about what caused the decline in cases in October. She responded it happened when HUD was closed during the government shutdown.

Updates on H.B. 171

Chair Byrne briefly mentioned that H.B. 171 is the General Assembly's Legislation about DEI regulations for federal funding. Director Ekblad reported that H.B. 171 is still vetoed and is trying to be overturned. Commissioners Sonia Barnes and Sharon Williams gave insight on this agenda item.

Governor's Fair Housing Proclamation

Chair Byrne mentioned that the draft proclamation for fair housing month has been sent to them for their review with no action required.

Updates on Commissioner Outreach Efforts for S.B. 257

Chair Byrne reported that the updates on commissioner outreach efforts for S.B. 257 will be forthcoming later in the year.

Schedule for 2026 meetings

Chair Byrne reminded the Commissioners of the remaining dates for upcoming NCHRC meetings: May 21st, August 20th, and October 22nd.

Questions/Answers/Comments

There were no additional questions or comments.

Adjournment

Chair Byrne gave closing remarks and adjourned the North Carolina Human Relations Commission meeting at 11:50 a.m.