

Berea Human Rights Commission

Regular Meeting Minutes

Location: Berea City Hall, 3rd Floor Conference Room

Date: Wednesday, February 25, 2026

Time: 6:00 p.m.

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:08 p.m.

II. Roll Call

Present: Felecia Ballard, Mim Pride, Janel Lakes Davenport, Doug Martin, Heather Johnson, Sharyn Mitchell

Absent: Susie Harris

III. Welcome to Guest: Ali Blair from Amp Berea

IV. Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Mim Pride and seconded by Sharyn Mitchell. Motion carries.

V. Treasurer's Report

Attached to Minutes - no changes. Accepted by common consent.

VI. Unfinished Business

2026 Juneteenth Celebration:

Ali Blair presented:

Ali submitted a preliminary report with general information and some budget numbers to guide the discussion. That report is attached to the minutes.

Presentation Items:

1. Date/Time: June 14, 2025 is first choice for date, with June 13 as backup date. Last year, the time was 4-7 p.m.
2. Location: Berea Community School (BCS) lawn is the first choice, and City Park Expansion as second choice. Ali will move forward with submitting paperwork to BCS for use of the lawn space, which then goes on to the Berea Board of Education for final approval.
3. Talent:
 - A. Felecia Ballard sent information about Billy DuVall, Jr. to Ali. Billy has ties to Berea.
 - B. Nikki D and the Sisters of Thunder, Gospel Blues band from Ohio are available on June 14. Will hold that date until after the meeting and the Commission determines if they want to move forward.
 - C. Kentucky Arts Council (KAC) has a directory of performing artists. Ali reviewed that list and recommended three for consideration: The Afrophysicists (Louisville), Tony Wavy (Lexington), and Louisville Leopard Percussionists.
4. Funding:
 - A. The KAC bands will have higher price points, but you can apply for a grant through KAC, which is up to \$5k. The grant does require a match of 25% of the request.
 - B. There is also the South Arts Grant, which Ali believes we can apply for as a municipality. That grant requires the artist to be from the South Arts region. They also require two public-facing activities: one performing and one educational. This grant opens us up to many other possibilities.

Ali offered to put those proposals together, and Doug Martin offered to assist.

 - C. Levitt Grant Parameters: These apply specifically to the headlining artist: must be a professional artist, must make and sell their own original music, and have a web presence. For these funds, we cannot have a cover band that does not perform its own original music. Consequently, Billy DuVall, Jr. could not be the headliner unless he has an online presence showcasing original work. Nikki D would meet their requirements.

E. Sharyn Mitchell raised the concern of DEI language in applications. Ali stated that grant applications for sources that receive any federal funds have to be free of any blacklisted words or terminology. Sharyn was concerned that any mention of "Juneteenth" could be an automatic rejection. Ali said she has acquired the experience necessary to navigate using the preferred language.

5. Partnering:

A. Felecia Ballard stated that other organizations in Madison County would like to come together and do a county-wide celebration. These included the following: Richmond Human Rights Commission, Richmond-Madison County NAACP, Our Land of Promise, et al.

B. Felecia posed the question of what that would look like. How would it affect our work with Levitt? Ali stated she would need clarity on divisions of responsibilities to avoid confusion and miscommunication. As long as the grant parameters are adhered to, collaboration would be ideal.

C. The first meeting of the interested parties will be next Tuesday, March 3, at 6 pm, and it will be a virtual meeting. The President of the NAACP, Aaron Milton, will be facilitating the meeting. Felecia let him know that we would prefer to fold our event, as it is, into the county-wide schedule.

D. Ali stated that no political activity can take place per Levitt guidelines. Information can be distributed, just no lobbying or anything seeming partisan in any way.

6. Budget:

The budgeting for the Juneteenth Celebration was discussed.

7. Other Discussions:

A. Janel Lakes Davenport asked about average playing times for acts. Ali replied Berea Amp typically has one opening act with one headliner, with a short intermission. They contract the headliner to play 75-90 minutes. Janel asked if it was possible to have several opening acts. Ali stated that this was what typically occurred at previous Juneteenth events and listed many of those openers.

B. Mim Pride asked if we purposefully sought acts to fill in gaps for last year's event. Sharyn Mitchell stated they didn't have a headliner, so it ended up being more of a community event.

Mim stated if we plan now to have a headliner, we would just need to fill a few slots. There are positive aspects to both approaches.

C. Felecia asked if Ali recommends Nikki D above all the other possibilities as the headliner. Ali enthusiastically supports her as the headliner. She then proceeded to play some of her music.

D. Janel stated we could potentially have Nikki D as the headliner, along with an act or two from the KAC list. Mim suggested we open with a local performer, then maybe a second act from KAC, then headliner, and close with a big finale, like the community choir they had last year.

E. Other performer suggestions included: Men in Christ, high school drumming group, Jocelyn & the Sweet Compressions, violinist, et al. Sharyn agreed with Mim with building up to the headliner.

F. Sharyn stated she thought we should move ahead with Nikki D as the headliner. Felecia asked if their fee could potentially be covered by KAC or South Arts grants. Ali stated no, since they were from Ohio. Sharyn asked if they were covered by Levitt funds. Ali said they were covered by Levitt, but securing other grant funds would be optimal to help pay for other things.

G. Other potential funding sources were discussed to match Levitt's \$4k. Some funding sources did not work out last year due to the parameters of BHRC. Ali said funds could move through Berea Amp if necessary. They are a 501 (c) 3. We could potentially ask Tourism.

8. Janel moved to finalize June 14, 2026, as the official date for 2026 Juneteenth. Doug Martin seconded the motion. Motion carried.

9. Janel asked Ali to move ahead with securing Nikki D, and Sharyn asked Ali to move forward with securing the Berea Community School lawn. Ali stated she will proceed with both requests.

10. Felecia asked if we were responsible for lodging. Ali stated she would add that to the budget. Berea Amp is hoping to get blocks of rooms at a local hotel. Sometimes they use STR's.

11. Mim stated she would approach Berea College and Union Church about possible sponsorships. Ali will reach out to Parks & Rec to hold City Expansion as a backup. Mim suggested reaching out to Tourism. Ali stated that we should hold off until she has her work session meeting with the

Tourism Commission. Ali will let us know when they are meeting, and we could include Juneteenth in that conversation.

12. Next steps: brainstorm suggestions for local acts, as well as apply for the grants. Ali explained the application process for KAC. We could apply to them for more than one artist. Felecia asked if anyone would be willing to work with Ali. Doug volunteered.

13. Sharyn asked if Louisville Leopard Percussionists would be the best of the three KAC acts she suggested. She said they weren't ranked in any order. Felecia suggested the Commissioners research the KAC bands individually and let everyone know their preference by March 1. Ali stated she believes the Afrophysicists would be the best fit.

14. Ali asked if we could have extra meetings to get things moving more efficiently. Felecia said we could schedule work sessions, then report back at our regular monthly meetings. She asked the Commissioners to send an email with dates/times they are available. Felecia expressed our appreciation to Ali for all of her hard work.

2026 Budget

Janel Lakes Davenport stated that the City moved us up last year to a \$3500 budget. That has not changed. Sharyn Mitchell asked if those funds were restricted for Juneteenth. The actual wording from the City was that the increase was due to donations and sponsorships. Ali Blair suggested they rolled the extra dollars into this year's budget. Janel stated the line item actually says "General Fund," which Mim Pride explained was because BHRC's funds are actually part of the Mayor's budget. Mim then stated we should come back to the City with justification to use those funds, such as much-needed office supplies or a printer. Felecia Ballard pointed out some of the items on our Agenda, including swag and marketing/promotional materials. Sharyn mentioned sponsoring other events. Mim stated the City is currently working on the 2027 Budget. Janel will work on a budget for BHRC, with these proposed expenses, and bring it back to the next meeting in March. Felecia asked if we could research different pull-up stands. Heather Johnson stated that a printer/copier would be possible, and Sharyn suggested folders and other office supplies.

Abolish Slavery Resolution

Tabled until next month, and we ascertain the status of the KY House Bill.

Website Updates

Felecia Ballard asked if we could get the missing minutes/agendas from 2025 posted and get older items removed. Janel Lakes Davenport will email September and October 2025 items to Daniel Brindley and Robin Adams. Janel explained that after each meeting's minutes are approved and signed-off by Felecia, Heather Johnson should email them to Robin and Daniel to put on the website.

KHRC Workshops

Felecia Ballard asked if there was anything particular anyone learned from them. Doug Martin stated he was surprised to learn how many cases brought before the KY Human Rights Commission were unsubstantiated, 75%.

2025 Annual Report

Felecia Ballard brought a copy of the last Annual Report from 2020, and stated it looked like it was basically an overview. Sharyn Mitchell will work on a draft report for 2025 and bring it to the next meeting.

Proclamation for Older Americans Month

Mim Pride will reach out to Katie Heckman to work on a draft.

VII. New Business

BHRC Logo

Sharyn Mitchell proposed using the City of Berea's logo, but replacing "1899" with "Human Rights are Civil Rights." Also, putting "Human Rights Commission" across it. Sharyn stated she would submit something to the Commission and that when she spoke with Mayor Fraley he told her he was fine with the BHRC making its own logo.

Swag, Marketing Material

Discussed previously under Agenda Item "2026 Budget."

Approval of Press Release

Felecia Ballard brought the draft made by Heather Johnson. Felecia then asked where it should be sent. Mim Pride said the Berea Citizen and Richmond Register. Heather Johnson suggested The Edge. Sharyn Mitchell suggested putting Berea Human Rights Commission, Kentucky, so we don't get mistaken for Berea Ohio's HRC. Sharyn then asked Heather to make certain it's Susie Harris and not Mary Harris for her preferred name. Mim Pride moves to accept the Press Release with corrections. Janel Lakes Davenport seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Announcements

None

Commissioners Comments

Sharyn Mitchell asked for clarification about the nominating process for the 2026 KY Civil Rights Hall of Fame Award. Felecia Ballard then read the notice sent to us from Juan Pena. Sharyn Mitchell expressed interest in nominating Kent Gilbert. Felecia stated that the criteria didn't specify whether the submission had to come from an individual. Felecia asked if we wanted to submit as a Commission. Doug Martin stated it would

probably carry more weight if we did. Felecia asked if we wanted to move forward with nominating Kent or possibly consider other candidates. Mim Pride and Sharyn said they would work together on that nomination. Sharyn also suggested sending Susie Harris' nomination for Eef Fontyanez for the John G Fee Award to his family.

Felecia Ballard stated she brought BHRC information to the "Footprints: Traces of Black History in Richmond, Kentucky" event that took place the previous Saturday. The NAACP and the Richmond Human Rights Commission were two sponsors of this event. Janel Lakes Davenport asked if there were other promotional materials at the event that we could possibly get for the BHRC. Suggestions included screen cleaners, pens, phone pockets, etc. Sharyn asked what the goal was for these county-wide events, and Felecia said her understanding was that they ultimately wanted to bridge the gap between our two communities and to show more unity. That is also their goal for Juneteenth. Felecia will have more information on what this collaboration looks like after their meeting next week. Sharyn attended a CELTS meeting that had many local groups providing resources. That is something BHRC would be interested in taking part in the future.

Ali Blair said Levitt Amp has a toolkit that states specifically what is in the grant agreement concerning political activity. Ali is going to forward that information to the Commission.

IX. Adjournment

Mim Pride made a motion to adjourn. Motion was seconded by Heather Johnson. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

Prepared by Heather Johnson - Secretary, Berea Human Rights Commission

Approved by

Felecia J. Ballard