

Who is the Town of Nashville Human Rights Advisory Committee?

Since the establishment of the HRAC nine months ago, the five Committee members have committed our time, areas of expertise, and passion for human rights for all of the Town of Nashville's citizens and visitors to form a singular but multilayered voice. Our unequivocal and enthusiastic recommendation to the Nashville Town Council is contained within this document and in the shared documents on our Drive, which we hope will clarify both our extensive research and our desire to encourage the establishment of a volunteer Town of Nashville/Brown County Human Rights Commission.

Our committee (President Domonic Potorti, Vice President Melissa Rittenhouse, Secretary Laura McCracken, Member Beth Schroeder and Member Denny Kubal) brought to this Committee years of expertise and experience in:

- Healthcare (twenty years)
- Human Rights activism (five years)
- Commercial litigation management (thirty-two years)
- Children's legal advocacy (two years)
- Humanitarian efforts (such as work with Brown County Habitat for Humanity, Brown County Drug Free Coalition, and faith-based missions committees, more than twenty years)
- Public school education (more than thirty years)
- Criminal justice (ten years)
- International education and immigration law (seventeen years)
- Intercultural communication education (seventeen years)

As citizens of Brown County for a combination of forty-two (42) years, the members of this Committee have brought our diverse backgrounds to serve, educate, and be involved in our community, and it was our genuine pleasure to enthusiastically work together with this Committee to further the betterment of it.

Town of Nashville's Human Rights Advisory Committee

Recommendation Document

Goal: Establishment of a Human Rights Commission for the Town of Nashville

Recommendations from the Human Rights Citizens Advisory Committee regarding the **Need** for a Human Rights Commission:

- Establishment of a Human Rights Commission will ensure that the Town of Nashville/Brown County takes every opportunity to comply with current human rights laws and policies
- The Indiana Civil Rights Commission Annual Report (2020) shows that:
 - 8,581 calls/reports were made to the ICRC State office;
 - 784 were drafted into complaints;
 - 282 were from Region 9, which includes Brown County
- The historical record of bias, discrimination and need has been demonstrated by:
 - a. Well-documented cases that have been reported in *The Democrat*
 - b. Comments and complaints lodged at the Visitors Center
 - c. Personal testimony by shop owners, students and delivery drivers
 - d. The 100+ people who participated in the Nashville Solidarity Rally
- An established Human Rights Commission will consolidate reporting which is currently scattered across numerous organizations
- An established Human Rights Commission will provide the complainant with an environment that is safe, confidential and aided by a trained volunteer

- This local human connection demonstrates that the community values the individual and will guide them in reporting an alleged discrimination
- An established Human Rights Commission will track community progress in several human rights-related areas, which may provide credibility in business reviews, innovative human rights policies, may, for example, boost local tourism and business, recruitment of employees, attract potential residents, writing of grants, ratings in surveys and boost the overall perception and health of the community
- An established Human Rights Commission will provide public acknowledgement that what happens to one person happens to all

Recommendations from the Human Rights Citizens Advisory Committee regarding the **Scope** of a Human Rights Commission:

- It is well-established that the declaration and elevation of civil and human rights upholds the sanctity of the individual and guarantees their ability to participate freely in society
- Along with state and local partner agencies, an established Human Rights Commission would provide infrastructure that can serve as a resource on human rights close to home, reducing bias and discrimination in our community
- An established Human Rights Commission would develop a phased plan of action with volunteer commissioners to promote and protect human rights in Brown County through local implementation, monitoring, education, and state enforcement
- An established Human Rights Commission would encourage community input and develop strong relationships with all citizen groups of Brown County
- An established Human Rights Commission would ensure that the Town of Nashville and Brown County take(s) every opportunity to comply with current human rights law and policy
- An established Human Rights Commission would conduct data collection, training, and public education

Recommendations from the Human Rights Citizens Advisory Committee regarding the **Structure** of the Human Rights Commission:

- **Volunteer** Commission would be comprised of seven members, with the selection of the commission members emphasizing diversity and representation
 - At least two committee members would be Town of Nashville residents, while the remaining five members be residents of Brown County
- Commission comprised of President, Vice President, Secretary, a Local Government Liaison, an Education and Awareness Coordinator and an Intake Liaison, served in 24 month terms staggered to ensure continuity of knowledge, with a seventh place reserved for another member whose role would be determined by the established Commission in coordination with Town Council
 - Liaison for Local Government would not be **exclusively** working with Town of Nashville and other Brown County agencies, but would develop a significant relationship with these agencies on behalf of the Commission
 - Intake Liaison would not be **exclusively** working with complaints but would be working closely with the State in a hybrid commission model (where the State of Indiana would have responsibilities too as outlined and enumerated to the Committee)
 - Education and Awareness Coordinator would not be **exclusively** working with education and initiatives, but would be working to identify and/or develop free education and awareness activities and opportunities to be promoted and included on the Town of Nashville's website and other social media as appropriate
- Town of Nashville's Town Council appoints the first seven members, and thereafter the Commission members make recommendations to Town Council regarding the appointment of future members

Recommendations by the Human Rights Citizens Advisory Committee regarding the **Function** of the Human Rights Commission:

An established Human Rights commission would:

- Guide the Town Council in adopting an Ordinance for protections as outlined in State and Federal law
- Create an informational page on the Town of Nashville website on the role of the Commission
- Establish procedures to take all calls related to human rights issues
- Be trained in the area of complaint intake and provide assistance in drafting complaints and submitting to the Indiana Civil Rights Commission (ICRC) for processing
- Document all inquiries and complaints filed, doing so with confidentiality, for the purpose of data collection and internal understanding of events in the community
- Offer training to leaders in both the public and private sector
- Establish a relationship with the State Regional Director, utilizing State educational resources
- Survey existing ways in which human rights are locally addressed with a goal to enrich and expand on programming (example: working with Brown County School's Equity and Inclusion Coach)
- Solicit the participation of citizens groups, businesses and stakeholders within the community
- Use available resources such as Welcoming Survey and Municipal Equity Index as tools to assess cultural awareness and work towards educational solutions

- Prepare and issue an annual report to the Nashville Town Council and Brown County Commissioners, describing in detail the progress made and work performed
- Provide a mechanism of external review of commission activities