

Chapter 45A, BINGHAMTON HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION [HISTORY: Adopted by the City Council of the City of Binghamton 12-7-11 by L.L. No. 11- 3; Amended 2016.02.18 by L.L. No. 16-01; Amended 2024.6. __ by L.L. No. 24-02]

§ 45A-20. Name. Pursuant to General Municipal Law § 239-o, the City of Binghamton hereby establishes the Binghamton Human Rights Commission (the “Commission”).

§ 45A-21. Purpose. The purpose of the Commission is to condemn discrimination in all its forms, to educate the public, and to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against people as set forth in Chapter 45, Binghamton Human Rights Law, veteran status, or criminal conviction to the extent provided by Correction Law § 752.

§ 45A-22. General duties and powers. It shall be the duty of the Commission:

1. (a) To foster mutual respect and understanding among all groups as set forth in Chapter 45, Binghamton Human Rights Law, veteran status, and those with prior criminal convictions. (b) To make such studies in any field of human relationship in the community as in the judgment of the commission will aid in effectuating its general purposes and where desirable, to make the results of such studies public. (c) To inquire into incidents of tension and conflict among or between various groups, and to take such action as may be designed to alleviate such tensions and conflict. (d) To conduct and recommend such educational programs as, in the judgment of the Commission, will increase goodwill among inhabitants of the community and open new opportunities into all phases of community life for all inhabitants.

2. In addition to all other powers, the City of Binghamton hereby grants these additional powers: (a) To report complaints to the New York State Division of Human Rights alleging unlawful discriminatory practices under Article Fifteen of the Executive Law or Chapter 45 of the Binghamton Human Rights law. (b) To receive, accept and use and expend public grants and private gifts, donations or bequests and other payments, goods and services, as may be approved as part of the City’s budget process.

§ 45A-23 General obligations. The Commission shall discharge the following obligations.

1. To receive complaints of alleged discrimination, to seek the active assistance of the division of human rights in the solution of complaints which fall within the jurisdiction of the division and to prepare its own plans in the case of other complaints with a view to reducing and eliminating such alleged discrimination through the process of conference, conciliation and persuasion.

2. To hold conferences, and other public meetings in the interest of the constructive resolution of group tensions and the prejudice and discrimination occasioned thereby.

3. To issue such publications and reports of investigation as in its judgment will tend to effectuate the purposes of this Chapter.

4. To enlist the cooperation and participation of the various racial, religious and nationality groups, community organizations, industry and labor organizations media or mass communication, fraternal and benevolent associations, and other groups in an educational campaign devoted to fostering among the diverse groups of the community mutual esteem, justice and equity and opening new opportunities into all phases of community life for all individuals.

5. To encourage and stimulate agencies under the jurisdiction of the City of Binghamton to take such action as will fulfill the purposes of this article.

6. To submit an annual report of the services performed by March 1 of the following year to City Council and the Mayor and to furnish a copy thereof to the New York State Division of Human Rights.

§ 45A-24. Officers and employees; expenses. The Commission shall have the power and authority to employ an executive director, a secretary and such attorneys, experts and other employees as may be necessary, and to otherwise expend funds within the amount made available by the City of Binghamton as part of the City's budget process.

§ 45A-25. Membership, Rules and Procedures.

1. Number. The Commission shall consist of seven (7) voting members and two (2) ex-officio, non-voting members.

2. Appointments. The Binghamton City Council and Mayor are hereby specified and designated as the public bodies who shall appoint the voting members of the Human Rights Commission with City Council appointing four members of the Commission and the Mayor appointing three members of the Commission. All members shall reside or work in the City of Binghamton. The three Mayoral appointments shall be subject to approval of City Council. In appointing the Members, the City Council and the Mayor will attempt to recruit members from the community who represent the diversity of the community as set forth in Chapter 45, Binghamton Human Rights Law, veteran status, or those with prior criminal convictions. The Mayor and City Council will each appoint one (1) ex-officio, non-voting Member to the Commission.

3. Term of Membership. The terms of all active appointments to the Commission made prior to January 1, 2025, shall expire and end on January 1, 2025 such that the Commission shall have no members on January 1, 2025. Members shall be appointed in accordance with Section § 45A-25(2) for two (2) year terms, except that the initial term of all members will expire on December 31, 2026. Thereafter all terms will expire on December 31 of each even numbered year. Ex-officio, non-voting members will be appointed to one (1) year terms. The Commission will vote for a Chairperson for each year. Members, ex-officio non-voting members, and the Chairperson may be re-appointed without term limits.

4. Vacancies. In the case of death, resignation, or removal of a Commission Member, a successor to fill the balance of the unexpired term shall be filled in the same manner as appointments.

5. Membership responsibilities. All Commission members must personally attend at least seventy-five percent (75%) of the scheduled meetings per year. Members will be expected to maintain confidentiality of all cases that come before the Commission to the extent that protects the claimants against legal risk.

6. Removal. Members may be removed from the Commission by City Council for failing to carry out membership responsibilities. To be removed a Commission Member must receive a no confidence vote by a majority of City Council.

7. Rules and procedures. The Commission may adopt such rules and procedures, including the creation of committees, as it may deem necessary and proper to fulfill the purposes of this Chapter. The Commission will meet monthly at City Hall at a date and time determined by the Commission. The City will provide a meeting room and other related services.

8. All correspondence or inquiries to the Commission will be referred to the Chairperson