

BYLAWS OF THE HARRIS COUNTY LGBTQIA+ COMMISSION

ARTICLE 1 PURPOSE AND POWERS

Section 1. The purpose of the Harris County LGBTQIA+ Commission (“Commission”) is to serve as an advisory body to the Commissioners Court, which would provide recommendations to the Commissioners Court to improve outcomes and support LGBTQIA+ residents of Harris County

Section 2. In fulfillment of its purpose, the Commission shall be governed by, and shall have all the powers set forth in the Order adopted by, Harris County Commissioners Court on June 6, 2023.

Section 3. The Commission shall abide by the articles set forth in these bylaws. For any areas not outlined or that conflict with the Harris County Uniform Policies and Procedures for Associated Appointment Processes and Oversight of County Boards and Commissions (“Uniform Policies and Procedures”), approved by Commissioners Court on April 27, 2021, the Uniform Policies and Procedures shall take precedence.

ARTICLE 2 SCOPE

Section 1. The Commission shall emphasize and prioritize the value of a diverse racial, ethnic, religious, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical and mental abilities, and socioeconomic background of the LGBTQIA+ Community throughout Harris County.

Section 2. The Commission shall apply an equity-oriented approach to all activities of the Commission including: analyzing the diverse needs of the LGBTQIA+ Community, evaluating relevant data and outcomes in research, targeting resources and strategies to minimize burdens on and increase opportunities for members of the LGBTQIA+ Community, and assessing the performance of the Commission and its activities through an advocacy lens, creating space for continual improvement while fostering positive change in the community.

Section 3. The Commission shall develop goals and coordinate research for recommended planning, programming, and action relating to the progression and protection of rights for the LGBTQIA+ Community in Harris County.

Section 4. The Commission shall continually examine and assess all existing County institutions, departments, facilities, services, and programs dealing with or affecting the LGBTQIA+ Community and shall develop goals and make recommendations to Commissioners Court on action to promote equity and fairness.

Section 5. The Commission shall connect and encourage research relative to Harris County LGBTQIA+ issues.

Section 6. Each year, the Commission shall focus on at least one issue relating to the economic opportunities and development for members of the LGBTQIA+ Community which may include without limitation: access to healthcare, pay equity, equal access to advancement and promotion in the workplace, workplace discrimination, housing, guidance counseling for LGBTQIA+ youth and caretakers, and other relevant issue areas.

Section 7. The Commission shall participate in community engagement at least once each year through means such as volunteerism, conducting and publishing surveys or public reports, and/or hosting community events and town halls.

Section 8. The Commission may make recommendations to Commissioners Court relating to communications through media outlets such as e-newsletters, a website, or social media applications and/or print to support and promote the activities of the Commission as well as the interests, endeavors, and wellbeing of LGBTQIA+ individuals in Harris County.

Section 9. The Commission shall submit to the Harris County Boards and Commissions Office (“HCBCO”) for placement on the Commissioners Court agenda, any recommendations the board desires Commissioners Court to consider for official action (Uniform Policies and Procedures, Article 22).

- a. When applicable, county departments or agencies shall retain the right to include an alternate recommendation for Commissioners Court’s consideration regarding a given matter raised by the Commission (Uniform Policies and Procedures, Article 22).
- b. Any formal communications to Commissioners Court shall be dated and signed by the Chair or Vice-Chair and shall fairly and accurately represent the position and/or sentiments of the majority (minimum six of eleven) of the County board as reflected in the meeting minutes of the body (Uniform Policies and Procedures, Article 23).

Section 10. No later than December 1 of even numbered years, the Commission shall file with the HCBCO an annual report of its activities and accomplishments during the previous year (Uniform Policies and Procedures, Article 22). The report shall also include:

- a. A section for goals and potential activities for the upcoming year; and
- b. A section describing the Commission’s efforts to center an equity approach in its activities during that previous year.

Section 11. The Commission shall perform other duties that may be assigned to it by the Commissioners Court.

Section 12. The Commission may create committees from among its membership and delegate to these committees responsibilities to carry out the purposes of the Commission.

Section 13. To cooperate in the development of educational programs dedicated to the improvement of the lives of LGBTQIA+ residents and visitors by eliciting support from public and private entities engaged in the inculcation of ideals of tolerance, mutual respect, and understanding for the LGBTQIA+ Community.

Section 14. The Commission shall recommend actions to address the social, economic, cultural, and political problems in the LGBTQIA+ Community, as well as to serve as a liaison between the LGBTQIA+ Community and the County community at large.

Section 15. The Commission shall make recommendations to Commissioners Court as to steps that can be taken to promote positive images and concepts of the LGBTQIA+ Community as well as promote their many contributions to our society.

Section 16. The Commission shall recommend revisions in County policies and procedures having potentially disparate negative consequences for LGBTQIA+ individuals.

Section 17. The Commission retains the right to work closely with all County offices, departments, and institutions, including (without limitation) the Harris Center for Mental Health and IDD, the Harris Health System, Harris County Resources for Children and Adults board of directors, and other relevant boards.

ARTICLE 3 **MEMBERSHIP**

Section 1. The Commission shall consist of eleven (11) members. Each member of Commissioners Court will nominate one (1) member to the Board. After each member of the Court has made its nomination, four additional At-Large positions to which the Court appoints shall be filled by a majority vote of the Court (Uniform Policies and Procedures, Section 8). The Commission will then have nine (9) Members who shall be tasked with selecting two (2) additional Committee Members by a majority vote of the nine (9) Court-appointed Committee Members. If a designated Commissioner seat is not filled within six (6) months of vacancy or following the expiration of a term, and such failure is primarily due to no eligible nominee being submitted by the applicable Commissioner, a nominee for the position shall be selected by a majority vote of the Commission, and submitted to the Commissioners Court for approval. Appointees selected under this method (“Interim Members”) will serve a one (1) year term, but otherwise will retain all regular Committee Member authorities.

The Commission will notify HCBCO and any Commissioner whose delegate for the Commission board is currently occupied by an Interim Member no less than thirty (30) days prior to the expiration of the Interim Member’s currently one (1) year term. If the respective Commissioner has not made a nomination to Commissioners Court for a regular Committee Member to serve in-lieu of the Interim Member at the expiration of the current term, the Commission may, again, nominate an individual for the position and submit the same to Commissioners Court for approval. This process may be repeated consecutively until the respective Commissioner nominates an individual for the board pursuant to the terms herein.

Section 2. Membership eligibility requirements and qualifications include:

- a. Must be a resident of Harris County;
- b. Must not be in arrearage in County taxes (Uniform Policies and Procedures, Article 5);
- c. Must have a credible record of attendance and performance with respect to any previous board experience (Uniform Policies and Procedures, Article 5); and
- d. Should have (i) demonstrated a commitment to and allyship toward the LGBTQIA+ community, (ii) displayed knowledge of LGBTQIA+ issues in Harris County, and/or (iii) demonstrated educational, employment, or nonprofit background in the progression/protection of gender studies, economic equity and/or development, public health, or a related field.

Section 3. Commission members shall serve without compensation at the pleasure of the Commissioners Court.

Section 4. All Commission members should be members of or caretakers for the LGBTQIA+ Community. The selection of board members should seek to involve and reflect (to the extent practicable without requiring intrusive questionnaires or other means that do not respect the individual privacy of each nominee) the diversity within the LGBTQIA+ Community. Accordingly, accumulations of any one of the following subgroups, to the extent remaining subgroups are denied meaningful representation, is discouraged:

- a. Lesbian
- b. Bisexual
- c. Gay
- d. Intersex
- e. Asexual
- f. Transgender
- g. Nonbinary
- h. Gender expansive
- i. LGBTQIA+ caretaker, healthcare, or public health professional

Members of the Commission should be drawn from diverse racial, ethnic, religious, age, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic backgrounds from throughout Harris County.

No Commission Member shall be asked to provide proof of belonging to any aforementioned protected category.

Section 5. Qualified candidates with interest in board membership and current members who are eligible and wish to seek another term shall follow the application process as outlined in Article 7 of the Uniform Policies and Procedures.

Section 6. Members shall initially be appointed to Places One through Eleven, with odd-numbered places (which will include the five (5) nominations made by members of Commissioners Court) serving for three (3) years and even-numbered places serving for two (2) years, with terms beginning January of each year. Upon expiration of the terms of members initially appointed, new members shall be appointed or reappointed to two-year terms. A member shall not serve more than two (2) consecutive terms.

Section 7. Each member is expected to attend all Commission meetings and meetings of committees of the Commission on which they serve. Members who are unable to attend a regularly scheduled meeting should inform the Commission Chair at least forty-eight (48) hours prior to any meeting.

- a. A member may be excused from attendance for an acceptable reason such as an illness, injury, childbirth, or adoption, in which case the member shall notify the Chair.
- b. Any member with an attendance record of less than 75% of regularly scheduled meetings within a 12-month period, beginning with the date of the most current active appointment, may forfeit their appointment to the Commission.

Section 8. Commission members shall only be removed (with or without cause) by the Commissioners Court, by majority vote, elect to remove any officer or member from the Commission, with such removal to be effective immediately following such election.

Section 9. A member who seeks to voluntarily resign from the Commission shall submit a written resignation to the Chair of the Commission, HCBCO, and the staff liaison. If possible, the resignation should allow for a 30-day notice so the Commissioners Court can appoint a replacement.

Section 10. Committee seats designated for Commissioner Offices and At-Large appointments shall only be filled by Commissioners Court. Committee Members will have oversight into the appointment of two (2) additional Members.

ARTICLE 4 **OFFICERS**

Section 1. The Officers of the Commission shall consist of a Chair, Vice-Chair, and a Secretary.

Section 2. Officers shall be elected by a majority vote of the Commission at the first regular meeting and annually thereafter.

Section 3. In the event of a vacancy among the current officers, the Commission may hold an emergency election as needed to elect a replacement officer.

Section 4. The Chair shall preside at Commission meetings, call special meetings when deemed advisable, appoint all committees, represent the Commission at Commissioners Court and formal functions, or send a member to represent and approve each final meeting agenda.

Section 5. The Chair may provide feedback to the HCBCO regarding the ideal characteristics and level of experience desired for potential board members, as well as new, detailed information regarding the respective board or commission. These items should include: the current board attendance record, the body's financial information, and its latest annual report (Uniform Policies and Procedures, Article 8(A)).

Section 6. In the absence of the Chair, the Vice-Chair shall perform all duties of the Chair.

Section 7. The Secretary shall be responsible for recording the minutes of Commission meetings to be approved at the next successive Commission meeting.

Section 8. Commissioners Court may, with or without cause, by majority vote, elect to remove any officer or member from the Commission, with such removal to be effective immediately following such election.

ARTICLE 5 **AGENDAS**

Section 1. Three (3) or more Commission members may place an item on the meeting agenda by oral or written request to the Chair at least five (5) days before the meeting.

Section 2. The Chair shall approve each final meeting agenda and may consult as needed with the Harris County Attorney's Office on agenda items.

Section 3. Agendas for upcoming meetings, if required to be posted, will be deemed to be properly posted when made available on the Commission's website in advance.

ARTICLE 6 **MEETINGS**

Section 1. Commission meetings shall be conducted in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order to the extent they are consistent with the Texas Constitution, statutes, and common law.

Section 2. The Commission may seek guidance from the Harris County Attorney's Office regarding the conduct of meetings, these bylaws, or any other matter for which legal counsel may be sought.

Section 3. The Commission shall meet, at a minimum, once every other month beginning in January and when the Commission is legally required to meet to comply with a legal deadline.

Section 4. In November of each year, the Commission shall adopt a schedule of meetings and events for the upcoming year, including makeup meeting dates for holidays and canceled meetings.

Section 5. The Chair may call a special meeting and the Chair shall call a special meeting if requested by three (3) or more members. The call shall state the purpose of the meeting.

Section 6. Six (6) members constitute a quorum.

Section 7. To be effective, a Commission action must be adopted by an affirmative vote of the number of members necessary to provide a quorum.

Section 8. The Chair has the same voting privilege as any other member.

Section 9. The Commission shall allow community members to address the Commission on agenda items and during a period set aside for community communication. The Chair may limit a speaker to three (3) minutes. Any community members wishing to address the Commission must register their intent through the Commission's website or other medium as provided by the Commission. The Commission may, at its option, (i) also require that those addressing the Commission utilize remote, electronic communication rather than permitting speakers to be physically present or (ii) permit community members to use either remote, electronic communication or attending the meeting physically.

Section 10. The Commission shall prepare and maintain minutes of meetings and other records as required by law.

ARTICLE 7 **AMENDMENT OF BYLAWS**

Section 1. The Commission may propose amendments to these bylaws in writing, at any time, and seek approval from the Commissioners Court.

Section 2. Commissioners Court, in its sole discretion, may, at any time, by order, amend these Bylaws by a majority vote of the Court.