Jackson County, Missouri

Commissioners
Howard Lotven, Chairman
Mary Shannon
Jacquelyn Eidson
Brent Herrick
Karen Baker

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Ethics, Human Relations, and Citizen Complaints Commission

Minutes
Ninth Regular Meeting
Thursday, September 17, 2026, at 5:15p.m.

1. Call to Order
   Howard Lotven, Chairman, called the ninth regular meeting of the Ethics, Human Relations, and Citizens Complaints Commission to order at 5:17p.m.

2. Roll Call
   Present: 3 - Howard Lotven, Jacquelyn Eidson, and Brent Herrick
   Absent: 2 – Karen Baker and Mary Shannon

3. Introduction of OEHRCC Staff and Members of the Public
   Present 3 – OEHRCC Staff Director Chris Crawford, Complaint Officer Lisa Kinney, Administrative Assistant Ashley Blaco

4. Approval of Minutes
   Without a quorum, a vote to approve the minutes of prior meetings could not be taken.

5. Director's Report
   Howard Lotven asked Chris Crawford to go ahead and read the director's report while waiting to establish a quorum.

   Jackson County Detention Center (JCDC)

   We discussed the rise in the JCDC complaints and our efforts to improve our ability to respond. As mentioned, we spoke with the JCDC leadership and agreed to some improved communications strategies between our agencies, including pre-agreed

response timelines and expectations for follow-ups if those timelines are not met, more frequent reporting from our office, and improved communication about policy changes, in addition to some other changes. Although we are still receiving a higher volume of the JCDC complaints, these changes have improved our communication with the JCDC and our ability to resolve the complaints in a timely manner.

Chris Crawford stated every Monday the JCDC is beginning to receive weekly reports to keep them up to date on cases. Chris Crawford continued to explain the updated process of receiving the JCDC complaints. No further questions and comments on the JCDC.

Complaints

Overall Numbers

Through August OEHRCC has received 225 formal complaints so far in 2026. This reflects a significant increase of 46% when compared to 2025; at the end of August 2025, we received 154 formal complaints. A large chunk of this increase can be attributed to the JCDC, but managing the overall increased complaints has exposed some inefficiencies in the office. We are implementing new strategies to address this and hope to improve moving forward as we expect complaints to continue to increase year over year.

Chris Crawford highlighted that monthly reports are sent out to departments for complaint cases that were received, closed and pending from previous thirty days. So that follow up is smoother than previously received. No further questions and comments on the overall complaints.

Blanket Complaints

Commissioners may notice an increase in complaints alleging broad accusations or requesting blanket investigations without any specific allegation against a particular individual or policy. Procedurally, OEHRCC has not found it fruitful to pursue full investigations into these complaints. For example, in case 26210 on this month's case summary report, the complainant requested a full investigation into all placements and decisions made by several employees within the public administrator's office. The complainant did not provide a specific case, client, or policy violation to look for. OEHRCC did not find that it would be beneficial to pursue a full blind review of hundreds of cases without more information and direction from the complainant. Commissioners are encouraged to share their thoughts on this policy.

Howard Lotven asked Chris Crawford about complaints and requests for investigation on the public administrator's office. Is the public administrator's office a part of the administration or the 16th judicial circuit? The public administrator is appointed by the court and primarily the cases they have almost exclusively come from probate court on people who require some type of administrative guardianship etc. that are within the probate court. Do we even have jurisdiction over those since we do not have jurisdiction over the courts themselves?

Chris Crawford responded stating the public administrator is appointed and supervised by the courts, but public administration employees are county employees. Howard Lotven was satisfied with Chris Crawford's answer.

Chris Crawford went further to explain that the OEHRCC did an internal review of their policies and procedures for handling certain types of things. One of their policies states that "anyone who is aggrieved can reach out to the OEHRCC with their grievance." That is their way of keeping themselves accountable to our process as well.

Howard Lotven was satisfied with Chris Crawford's answer.
No further questions and comments on the blanket complaints.

Prosecutor's Office

Prosecutor Melesa Johnson addressed the Kansas City Police Board of Police Commissioners (BOPC) and Attorney General Catherine Hanaway in late August at the BOPC meeting. In her address, the prosecutor spoke about the need to reform the state's self-defense laws, stating that current laws have made it difficult for her office to prosecute violent crime effectively. According to the prosecutor, her office has declined to prosecute 46 cases so far this year because of the state's self-defense laws. This issue has recently received more attention because two of the shooters from the 2024 Chiefs parade were offered significantly lesser charges in plea deals because the self-defense laws make more significant charges impossible to prove. The attorney general responded to the prosecutor's comments and stated that the issues from the Chiefs parade have provided reason to take a look at the state's use of force statute.

Chris Crawford mentioned he believes this is the first time a statewide official has acknowledged the need to review the state's self-defense laws and admitted that

there may need to be changes. The director also noted that this is progress, and the prosecutor's office is working hard on this matter. No further questions and comments on the prosecutor's office.

2026 General Election Maps

There has recently been a lot of back and forth about which congressional district maps will be used in the upcoming general election. In 2025, the general assembly adopted new maps redrawing the state's congressional districts. These maps were challenged by some citizens, and a petition was filed with sufficient signatures to allow voters to decide whether to adopt the maps. However, that petition was not certified in time by the secretary of state, and the new maps were used in the August primary election. After much back and forth, and involvement from the state and federal supreme courts, it has been determined that the maps in place prior to 2025 (adopted in 2022) will be used in the upcoming general election. This creates a strange situation where the districts will be drawn differently than they were for the primary election, and some voters' options will be different than they were in the primary election. The Jackson County Election Board (JCEB) reports that they are ready to re-implement the old maps for the general election and are confident they can ensure voters have the appropriate candidates and issues on their ballots based on those maps.

As Chris Crawford talked about the general election map, Howard Lotven spoke up to say that they were waiting to see what the circuit court says and waiting on the supreme court. Chris Crawford mentioned that he'd be surprised if the supreme court changed their ruling on the general election map. No further questions about the 2026 general election maps.

6. Approval of Case Summaries
   Previous case summaries not approved due to the lack of a quorum. The complaints will be provided at the next commission meeting for commissioners to review and approve.

   There were no questions and comments from the committee about the case summaries. Chris Crawford highlighted the Sheriff's Office complaint, noting that the complaint relates to the JCDC but falls within the purview of the sheriff, and the sheriff has requested that he be made aware of these types of complaints.

7. New Business
   None

8. Unfinished Business
   Howard Lotven and Chris Crawford talked about scheduling a special meeting with a closed session to discuss confidential matters, date to be determined. They want to insure the county counselor can be present along with a quorum of the commission for the closed session.

9. Public Comments
   None

10. Adjournment
    Howard Lotven declared the meeting adjourned due to lack of quorum.