

Duluth Human Rights Commission

Wednesday, October 9th, 2024 @ 5:30 p.m.

Duluth City Hall Room 430

Public Comment will be taken in person. Individuals may also e-mail or mail comments to the Commission prior to the meeting; see contact information at the bottom of the minutes for more information

1. Call to order
 - a. Meeting called to order at 5:32 p.m.
 - b. Commissioners present: Tyra Jaramillo-Kraemer, Frances Wittenberg, Dr. Marsha Lue, Jen Harris, Dr. Nomi Ostrander
 - c. Guests: Human Rights Assistant, Laura Laaksonen; Community member, Kathleen Spencer
2. Consent of Minutes - September 11th, 2024
 - a. No changes; Vice-Chair Ostrander motioned to approve the minutes; Commissioner Jaramillo-Kraemer seconded; unanimously approved
3. Public comments and guest comments
 - a. No comments at this time
4. Committee Reports
 - a. Executive Team Update
 - i. Chair Lue inquired to the Commission if there had been any follow-up or updates in which Eric Franklin was to take questions on behalf of the Human Rights Commission to the Citizen Review Board (CRB) and their meeting in September. Eric was to ask the CRB what happened to the personal belongings of those that were removed at City Hall when the encampment was dismantled. Laura Laaksonen responded that the meeting did not happen as the CRB did not have a quorum. Laura stated that she will remind the CRB that the HRC is inquiring
 - ii. A few questions as follows were brought up by Chair Lue:
 1. Have there been any noticeable trends since the encampment at Priley Circle - City Hall had been eliminated this summer?
 2. Have there been any more housing or beds made available (for the unhoused)?
 3. Have arrests of the unhoused increased, decreased, or stayed the same (after the ordinances were passed)?
 4. How are unhoused persons being informed of any resources available to them?

5. Of those being affected, are warnings being given that they need to move or are they being removed? Chair Lue furthers the thought that she is curious as to how the process is regarding enforcing the passage of the public safety ordinances
- iii. Laura will be happy to bring the aforementioned questions to a contact at the Citizen Review Board and reminded the Commission that the CRB meets in the next two weeks
- iv. Chair Lue posed a general question in which she wondered if there were any updates regarding the Crisis Response Team (CRT) in which funding was initially proposed to be cut and asked further when the funding stream is not tied to the city budget, is there a plan in place or any further discussion? To this question, Laura encouraged the Human Rights Commission to write a formal letter inquiring about any future plans for the CRT and to get something on record; she believes that this is an important question to ask and to think forward on
- v. Further discussion was had between Chair Lue and Vice Chair Ostrander if we should try to send another official invite to Mayor Reinert to attend one of our HRC meetings. Vice Chair Ostrander wondered if it would be a good idea to have the Mayor meet the collective of the city Commissions since they also want to have the Mayor attend their meetings
- vi. The Executive Team met on October 31st, 2024 at 6 p.m. via Zoom and will present any updates or new business at the November 13th HRC meeting

b. Findings Committee Update

- i. Case 1 - A man who uses a wheelchair contacted the Human Rights Office to talk about how there are so little housing options that are accessible for people with physical disabilities. He contacted the Office because he wants this cause to be talked about more
- ii. Case 2 - A person who is in a same-sex relationship contacted the Human Rights Office regarding their previous employer. Both themselves and their partner worked at a restaurant in Duluth for over a year. Their direct manager started making inappropriate comments to them about their same-sex relationship. They reported this behavior to a different manager, and they got in trouble for going over their direct manager's head and were terminated from their positions. Their manager in question then rehired for their positions and ended up hiring his family members. The Human Rights Office recommended that they file a complaint with the State Human Rights Office and file for unemployment
- iii. Case 3 - A preschool teacher and mandated reporter in Duluth found a child unattended in a room in the preschool for an extended amount of time. She made a mandated report about the situation and was treated poorly at work because of it. She was given a warning in her personnel

file, and the preschool is trying to revoke her license from DHS. She has also begun receiving harassment regarding how she dresses and how she looks, and she believes that this is discrimination against her due to her country or origin and religion. The Human Rights Office recommended that she files a complaint with the state, and also found statute language to show that what the preschool is doing goes against Minnesota Reporter Statutes about protection against retaliation

- iv. The Finding Committee met on November 8th, 2024 at 12pm via Zoom and will present any updates or new business at the November 13th HRC meeting

c. Communications Update

- i. Chair Lue asked the Commission for help on any ideas to present for December as the month remained open for discussion and stated that she has not seen any posts on City of Duluth social media pages regarding highlighting any topics that need recognition
- ii. Vice Chair Ostrander mentioned that there could be recognition of World Aids day coming up; guest Kathleen Spencer spoke to say that Indigenous Peoples' Day is coming up
- iii. Commissioner Jaramillo-Kraemer inquired if there has been anything posted recently or if we have worked to present any social media posts recently; Vice Chair Ostrander said that she made a statement for the month of June, but only saw a post on social media regarding applications for Human Rights Commissioners
- iv. A general question was presented as to why the Commission should work on write-ups if they are not going to be posted and it was further discussed that we should revisit the 2024-2025 Work Plan; Vice Chair Ostrander wondered if we could determine if the administration intends to post our ideas
- v. General question posed - Vice Chair Ostrander asked Laura how many people responded to the call for joining the Human Rights Commission and Laura did not have the answer to that and will find out

5. Old Business:

a. Superior Commission/Health Equity Panel

- i. Vice Chair Ostrander provided an update to Secretary Harris: On September 30th, Nomi Ostrander (Human Rights Commission), Ashlie Castaldo (Disability Commission) and Jade Wong (Mayor's Commission on Communities of Color--Superior, WI) met to discuss health equity panels. The meeting consisted of conversations around who to have on the panel, who might table at the event(s), and if there should be one panel in Superior and one panel in Duluth to make them more accessible to the public. Due to low participation at the meeting and the holiday season upcoming, this issue will be revisited in the new year.

6. Human Rights Office Report

- a. Per Laura Laaksonen, Human Rights Office Assistant, there is not much of an update to report to the Commission at this time besides that interviewing is moving along regarding the Human Rights & Equity Officer position for the City of Duluth. She believes there is movement with the interviewing process and hopes that within the next month or two, a decision for the Officer will be made
 - i. Commissioner Jaramillo-Kraemer asked if she knows how many applicants have applied and Laura believes it was about 7 or 8 people and now down to 4
 - ii. Kathleen Spencer mentioned that it seemed that Mayor Larson of the previous administration did not want a Human Rights department

7. Announcements and Upcoming Events

- a. 4th Annual Equity Summit - Commissioner Wittenberg attended and saw Carl Crawford (former Human Rights Officer for the City of Duluth) and the theme for the event was inclusion and action with various speakers
- b. St. Louis County Health & Human Service Conference - Commissioner Jaramillo-Kraemer will attend; further discussion of discussion with Amber Lewis about doing a workshop to see inclusion in action
- c. Commissioner Wittenberg stated that she is trying to recruit and let people know about the Human Rights Commission while at events
- d. Commissioner Jaramillo-Kramer stated that she did not have any events to discuss at this time, but wanted to remind everyone that Domestic Violence Awareness Month is in October; AICHO and Safe Haven have events in the month, as well as UMD
- e. The H.O.T.D.I.S.H. Militia Bake-Off Fundraiser is coming up on October 26th at Peace Church at 5 p.m. - promoted to the Commission by Vice Chair Ostrander; Kathleen Spencer said that there were about 30 casseroles at the fundraiser at the event in 2023
- f. Indigenous Peoples' Day and events at University of Superior-Wisconsin - promoted to the Commission by Chair Lue
- g. The Presidential election was brought up by Commissioner Jaramillo-Kraemer and this was a reminder that we should **VOTE!** And all take care of ourselves between now and the next time the Commission meets

8. Additional public comments and commissioner comments

- a. Additional comments by Vice Chair Ostrander were presented regarding December being a time to look at budgeting and was wondering if the Commission will have a role to play in some of the social services that are funded. She wondered if any organizing work is needing to be done by the HRC in deciding on what gets funded
 - i. Chair Lue is not sure what role the Commission has had in the past and Laura responded that she senses that the City Council likes to hear from us and that it might not hurt to send a letter to the Council

- b. Regarding the investigation and Mayor Reinert and his significant other acting on City business without having an official role in Administration, Vice Chair Ostrander was curious if the City Council would have a part in the internal investigation
 - i. Laura let the Commission know that Jessica Fralich (City Attorney) has a new role now as a judge at the 6th District and it is unsure who will replace Jessica at this time; David Johnson (6th Judicial District Judge) is also retiring and she is further unsure what to tell the Commission at this time regarding the internal review
 - ii. Chair Lue will ask around if there are any updates to the internal and external review of this matter
 - iii. Commissioner Jaramillo-Kraemer thinks it is a good idea to send a letter to the City Council for the Human Rights Commission to be involved more on any City matters relevant to us or issues that we would like further clarification on
9. Adjourn time: 6:04 p.m.
- a. Next meeting is Wednesday, November 13th, 2024 at City Hall Room 430 at 5:30 p.m.

Minutes submitted by:
Jen Harris, Secretary

The public is encouraged to submit comment to the commission prior to the meeting by emailing humanrights@duluthmn.gov or mailing comments to City Hall at 411 W 1st St, Attn: Human Rights Office Room 434, Duluth, MN 55802.

Please note that all public comment is considered Public Data.