

Duluth Human Rights Commission (HRC)

Wednesday, September 11th, 2024 @ 5:30pm

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 5:30pm
 - b. Commissioners present: Marsha Lue, Tyra Jaramillo-Kraemer, Nomi Ostrander, Jen Harris; City Staff - Laura Laaksonen
 - c. Commissioners absent: Frances Wittenberg
 - d. Guests: Chance Wells
2. Consent of Minutes - August 14th, 2024
 - a. Commissioner Jaramillo-Kraemer motioned to approve the August 14th, 2024 meeting minutes; seconded by Chair Lue; unanimously approved
3. Public Comments and Guest Comments
 - a. Chance Wells, an Organizer for Out Front Minnesota attended the meeting as a public guest and they look to attend our HRC meetings when able and also attended to promote an event being planned for October 19th at the Wired Whisker called Drag Out the Vote (Further information below in the Announcements and Upcoming Events section)
4. Committee Reports
 - a. Executive Team
 - i. Chair Lue brought up the statement that was initially drafted by Vice Chair Ostrander in early August in which we called for the release of the two individuals that were arrested at the encampment at Priley Circle in front of City Hall. The individuals were released before we finalized the statement (the statement did not go public), but we still have questions if these individuals have charges affixed to their names; the Executive Team would like to refocus the feel and flow of the statement if needed
 - ii. Chair Lue provided an update regarding Eric Franklin, President of the Duluth Citizen Review Board, and his attendance at the August 28th Citizen Review Board meeting in which he asked a few questions on behalf of the Human Rights Commission. Eric asked the Duluth Police Department if they could look into the arrests that were made the morning of August 7th, 2024 when the Free Palestine/unhoused encampment in front of City Hall at Priley Circle was dismantled, specifically if charges

still exist for the two individuals arrested. Per Chair Lue, she said that Eric also inquired as to where encampment individuals' belongings ended up after personal effects were thrown into dumpsters and hauled away. The HRC hopes to receive an update soon regarding such

- iii. Commissioner Jaramillo-Kramer asked how we intend on refocusing the statement and would be happy to take a look at it and provide feedback or suggestions. Chair Lue let her know that we are trying to be proactive with intentions on hearing our community partners and what their needs are after the public safety ordinances were passed and primarily how the Human Rights Commission can assist; per Chair Lue, we are in the beginning stages of reaching out to our community partners and have some contact with Loaves and Fishes, Lifehouse, and hope to get into contact with Deb Holman affiliated with street outreach and CHUM

b. Findings Committee

- i. Commissioner Jaramillo-Kraemer provided an update in which there were no cases to discuss for the month of September (the Findings Committee did not meet for their intended September 9th meeting) but acknowledged the cases that were presented at last month's meeting were an accumulation of months' worth of complaints into the Human Rights office; Vice Chair Ostrander asked if there was a lag or an increase of cases due to the public safety ordinances that were passed by City Council, but Commissioner Jaramillo-Kraemer responded that the amount of cases discussed at last month's meeting was due to not meeting for three-months; Laura Laaksonen stated that there might have been an increase in complaints as there might have been more interactions with police due to the summer months with more activity going on in the community

c. Communications Committee:

- i. There was some discussion about the June Pride communications post that was sent to the City in which Vice Chair Ostrander did not see the post but she mentioned that she saw a post on the City of Duluth's Facebook page calling out for Human Rights Commissioners and applications are due September 23rd, 2024; Laura Laaksonen will find out more information regarding this post from the City; Chair Lue wondered if the due date was to be a motivational factor to get more applications in quickly
- ii. Vice Chair Ostrander asked Chair Lue and Laura Laaksonen about the Human Rights & Equity Officer position and if there is an update in the process; Laura said that she does not really have an update but there has been some internal movement within City Hall; stated that Ben Van Tassel is filling in for a lot of different roles; it was stated that there are a lot of applicants for the Human Rights & Equity Officer position, but she

does not anticipate any further updates until the end of September or sometime in October

- iii. A brief observation was made from Vice Chair Ostrander regarding reading articles with interest of the departures from the City

5. Old Business:

- a. Superior Commission/Health Equity Panel: Chair Lue let the Commission know that Vice Chair Ostrander is willing to help out from our Commission and that she knows that Jade from the Superior Commission is on board and that we are waiting to hear from others to join the panel; Vice Chair Ostrander mentioned that there is some curiosity regarding big players in the Twin Ports; she wonders where Essentia stands (on the topic of health equity) in reference to their stance on the recent public safety ordinances that were passed by the City Council and wondered what it would look like if Essentia was on the health equity panel; A meeting with Jade is going to be set up to discuss where to go from here and to discuss next steps

6. Human Rights Office Report

- a. Human Rights Assistant Laura Laaksonen let the Commission know that she does not have a lot to discuss that has not already been covered in this meeting and other recent meetings but iterated that there is a lack of the Human Rights Officer and that we need Commissioners to be appointed; Chair Lue stated that if we know someone that applies to be on the HRC to email Ben Van Tassel to try to highlight the applicant to push applications through. Commissioner Jaramillo-Kraemer asked if there are applicants for the Commission and Laura Laaksonen stated that there are a few, maybe 4 to 5 applications

7. Announcements and Upcoming Events

- a. Vice Chair Ostrander promoted the 2nd Annual, family friendly Pride in the Park event at Wade Bowl Park in Superior, Wisconsin (1228 Clough Ave, Superior WI 54880)
 - i. Event time: September 15th, 2024 from 1pm to 3pm
- b. Chair Lue stated that she was sent information looking for BIPOC individuals in Minnesota to have a community discussion regarding outdoor recreation; explained further that this was a research study and a 2-minute qualifying survey from a QR code could be completed; if an individual was selected, they could earn \$110
- c. Public guest Chance Wells promoted the Drag Out the Vote event that will take place on the patio of the Wired Whisker (1823 E Superior St, Duluth 55812); There will be voter registration opportunities with live drag performances on the patio of the Wired Whisker along with other community resources

- i. Event time: October 19th, 2024 from 5pm to 7pm; Performances start at 6pm

8. Additional Public Comments and Commissioner Comments

- a. Secretary Harris asked for a few minutes of the Commission's time to highlight three very personal and important topics that are highlighted in the month of September

- i. Hispanic Heritage Month - Secretary Harris recognized that Hispanic Heritage Month starts September 15th through October 15th and this is a great time to highlight the vibrancy of a beautiful and colorful culture; she spoke of personal experiences facing racism in the city of Duluth and with being made to feel different, that she "bleached the Hispanic" out of her hair to try to not look as different than other Duluthians in hopes of fitting in with the demographic. "It's taken me a long time with a lot of painful experiences to realize that representation matters. It's also taken a long time for my hair to look like my Grandma's again. It's a privilege for me to be a Human Rights Commissioner - to work to make sure that being Hispanic is not synonymous with being illegal or being a criminal. We exist here in the Twin Ports to contribute ideas, ancestral perspectives, and heart."
- ii. National Suicide Prevention Month - September is National Suicide Prevention Month and suicide is the 11th leading cause of death in the United States; Secretary Harris addressed the Commission with her family's struggles with depression and acknowledged the "what-if's" that exist when someone you know dies by suicide; "Over time, you can ask, "What can I do?" If you know someone that doesn't have a good support system, please check on them. We can start small, even. Let's check on someone tonight."
- iii. World Childless Week - Secretary Harris acknowledged the damaging rhetoric in the news about childless people and wanted to recognize that World Childless Week happens from September 16th to September 22nd and focuses on the *Childless Not By Choice* Community. She explained that 1 in 6 experience infertility worldwide. "Many childless people live with a very deep void and it is painful when we hear comments that diminish our value in society or our efforts." She spoke briefly of some of the reasons that a person might not have children such as failed adoptions or being unable to afford IVF and that family planning is deeply personal and that sometimes, happy endings might not happen for everyone.
- iv. Before the meeting adjourned, Secretary Harris mentioned a personal hope of seeing more community members come to our Human Rights Commission meetings to tell us their stories of life experiences or instances of discrimination and bias and to further the cause of inclusion

through advocating and awareness.

9. Adjourn time: 5:51 p.m.

a. Next meeting is Wednesday, October 9th, 2024 at City Hall Room 430 at 5:30 p.m.

Minutes submitted by:
Jen Harris, Secretary

The public is encouraged to submit written comment to the Commission prior to the meeting by emailing 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