

Duluth Human Rights Commission

Wednesday, May 14th, 2025 @ 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 and Introductions

- a. Meeting called to order at 5:31 p.m. by Vice Chair Ostrander
- b. Commissioners present: Vice Chair Dr. Nomi Ostrander, Tyra Jaramillo-Kraemer, Secretary Jen Harris
New Commissioners: Amanda Shie, Luis Islas, Mark Edgette
 - i. All new and old Commissioners welcomed one another and gave a brief personal background; all new Commissioners had appointments approved by City Council in early 2025 and are on their first term
- c. Commissioners absent: None
- d. City Staff: Human Rights & Equity Officer - Dr. Marsha Lue
Community members: Kathleen Spencer

2. Acceptance of January meeting minutes - January 8th, 2025

- a. We will need to get clarity on voting for the January minutes since not all of the original members of the commission were present at the January 2025 meeting; Vice Chair Ostrander suggests voting at a later time once we clarify how to proceed

3. Public Comments

- a. None at this time

4. Committee Reports

- a. Executive Team
 - i. Vice Chair Ostrander spoke for the Executive Team and let the commission know that there is nothing new to report as the team did not meet in the last few months
- b. Findings Committee
 - i. Commissioner Jaramillo-Kraemer explained to the new commissioners what the Findings Subcommittee team does when they meet which is to find probable cause of human rights violations that are reported to the City. If there is any probable cause of a human rights violation, the Findings Committee will agree to report to the Human Rights & Equity Officer, Dr. Marsha Lue. If the Committee does not find a violation of human rights, discussion takes place on how to help the individual with known resources

- ii. The Findings Committee met on May 2nd, 2025 via Microsoft Teams. In attendance: Laura Laaksonen, Nomi Ostrander, Tyra Jaramillo-Kraemer, Marsha Lue, Jen Harris
 - 1. A woman said her manager at work is disrespectful and discriminating against her. She was injured at work and the manager is ignoring her requests for worker's compensation. She has messages from the manager about this and proof that the manager blocked her for five days. The woman says that this all started after the manager found out that she was dating a woman and the manager laughed at her and told her that dating another woman is disgusting. Marsha will be following up with the complainant
 - 2. An event happened in March 2025 when an employee that works from home had approval to take a day off with PTO. While driving back from where the person went on the day off, there was a bad accident that blocked the road and she could not get back to Duluth. She got permission to take an extra day off because she couldn't make it back due to the accident. After this incident, she was accused of time theft and was provided with a list of things that they said she did based on her time tracking and call log. She was provided with a disciplinary action form, but did not sign it. The personal phone calls she was taking on work time were insurance and medical calls related to a chronic health condition that she has. She was eventually terminated from her position. She was referred to ARC Northland and Marsha will not continue to follow up with this case
 - 3. A man called Marsha and filled out the form to submit a human rights complaint. He lives in Minneapolis but was in Duluth for a weekend. He has a medical disability and a service dog that alerts him when he needs it. He went to a local restaurant in downtown Duluth and the workers said that he cannot eat there because they do not allow animals and stated that they are a private establishment and can refuse service to anyone. He left the establishment without ordering. He was also staying at a hotel in Duluth. He was going to the hot tub and was stopped by the front desk attendant saying that there were no dogs allowed. The man called the corporate office and spoke to the general manager of the hotel, but they also said that it is a private business. It was also stated that there are no dogs allowed in the pool area by this general manager. He was also asked to provide documentation for the service animal. He is already pursuing this case at the state level with the Minnesota Department of Health. Marsha will be following up with him and plans to have some educational conversations with the restaurant and the hotel

5. Old Business

- a. Vice Chair Ostrander reported that at the last meeting in January, we approved the 2024/2025 Work Plan for the commission and it was reminded that Marsha emailed the

Work Plan previously. There are some items that the commission was unable to work due to not meeting in the months of February until May. As we get back up and running being able to make a quorum, we will revisit the plan

- b. We plan to connect again regarding the previously discussed Health Equity panel and collaboration with the Superior Commission on Communities of Color; it was noted that the Superior Commission has limited amount of members, so we will need to revisit the idea of the panel in future meetings
- c. Vice Chair Ostrander asked if the Human Rights Award is still ongoing through the City
 - i. Marsha does not know if the award will still be given but it would be nice to see the award still be given out
 - ii. A reminder was given during the meeting: The award is to give to a person or agency in the community for those doing important and vital work for human rights; we are unsure if this will be prioritized by the City to continue and need to confirm

6. New Business

- a. Juneteenth tabling - This was part of our 2024-2025 Work Plan and a discussion was started regarding upcoming events in town such as Pride, MMIWR, and more.
 - i. Marsha extended information to two Juneteenth events in which she is volunteering at the Central Hillside Community Center hosted by the Duluth Branch NAACP on June 19th with the event being shown to go from 3pm to 7pm. She requested help to table at this event possibly from noon to 2pm but there are other times to volunteer. At the table, there will be human rights information, a QR code to direct people to the City website, a brochure, etc. Message Marsha about volunteering
 - ii. Another event discussed was Juneteenth at Harrison Park likely taking place on June 20th, but we need to research details on that one. In the past, the event ran from 12pm to 6pm
- b. Marsha reminded the commission and informed new commissioners about keeping ISD 709 in mind and explained that ISD 709 is required to report to the Human Rights Commission yearly to inform us of any progress made on addressing higher rates of suspension and expulsion for Native and Black students in the past.
 - i. We have invited ISD 709 to our meetings in May previously, but will now extend invitation to them in September or October as they will have more up-to-date data to provide as opposed to them being in the middle of a school year
 - ii. Laura will send an email of invitation to them
- c. Vice Chair Ostrander asked if we need to get our yearly presentation on the City Council schedule as the Commission is required to report to Council each year; Laura will inquire about dates possibly in July

7. Human Rights Office Report

- a. Marsha started her position as Human Rights & Equity Officer on February 10th, 2025, previously serving as Chair of the Human Rights Commission. Since then, she has met

with various City departments, divisions, large organizations, and nonprofit representatives in town and provided a report of involvement so far during her tenure

- i. February 2025 - Attended the NAACP dinner in which Carl Crawford, former Human Rights Officer for the city was the emcee for the event
- ii. March 2025 - She noted to be mindful of those in the community that faced job loss due to federal cuts and executive orders starting around this time; Marsha spoke about the Duluth Workforce Development Center and if anyone is in a bind with finding employment to call or call in; there are folks there to help with resumes, cover letters, and job search advice, extending info on upcoming job fairs
- iii. Additional attendance at: a panel discussion for an Equity Summit, guest of a global perspectives panel, City Council retreat where she spoke of her background and what the Commission does, the Mayoral State of the City Address, UMD Powwow, Trans Day of Visibility
- iv. CHUM, Lifehouse, Union Gospel Mission, Duluth Age Friendly Association and PAVSA were some community organizations that she had reached out to or had attended meetings
- v. April 2025 - Marsha spoke of Twin Ports APIDA; discussed an exciting dragon dance performance, a hmong cultural display at the library; currently at UUCD there are textiles displayed; information was provided regarding the library having an equity based group that team members can be part of
- vi. May 2025 - Further discussion on how we can all be involved with Juneteenth and her personal involvement

b. Safe Bay discussion

- i. Marsha attended the Planning Commission meeting along with Secretary Harris at City Hall on May 13th, 2025 regarding approval or denial of a permit for Safe Bay to temporarily move to the Vineyard Church lot
- ii. With Chum under construction, there was an increased use at the Damiano Center which caused an increase in overnight parking for unhoused folks sleeping in their car temporarily. Safe Bay at the Damiano Center was monitored from 6pm until 8am the next day and visitors could use restrooms, shower, use wi-fi, and rest in their cars until the morning. Joel Kilgour and John Coleman (Stepping on Up/CHUM) searched for an alternative lot when it was determined that the Damiano lot was not conducive to operate during summer months and Vineyard Church on Kenwood Ave reached out to offer help for no fee
- iii. An application for a permit was submitted to the City for Safe Bay to temporarily move their operations to Vineyard Church from May 1 to Oct 1
- iv. After a long meeting and with many speakers in opposition of and for approval of the permit, there were some comments that stood out
 1. Secretary Harris noted some comments against Safe Bay such as a community member wanting to know if somebody would be checking to see if the folks sleeping in their cars in the lot have a valid driver's license or proof of insurance, which is not always available if fleeing from an

emergency; another comment was made in a hypothetical sense that a tent being affixed on the back of a truck bed could be skirting close to the term encampment; additionally there was a lot of discussion on snow fencing and how well fencing would shield visibility of cars and people from the neighbors surrounding the area

2. Secretary Harris noted to the commission that retired Duluth Police Chief Mike Tusken vouched for the important work that Safe Bay does and stated comments in favor of the approval of Safe Bay at Vineyard Church
 - v. Community member Kathleen Spencer spoke and said that she has the Next Door phone application and sees a lot of instances of NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard)
 - vi. The permit was approved for operation of Safe Bay on a temporary basis at Vineyard Church until Oct 1
- c. Discussion on recent ICE raids in Duluth
- i. Vice Chair Ostrander asked Marsha if she knows of any conversation from the City about the topic of immigration and ICE and she said that she knows that there is a lot of bystander training going on in town; she let us know that Duluth Police Department was not involved in the February 2025 raids in the Lakeside neighborhood and does not know where those that are detained are ending up
 - ii. New Commissioner Edgette asked how it is acceptable for ICE to wearing vests that say POLICE on them and there is no answer to that, only that the federal administration is at the helm of operations
 - iii. New Commissioner Islas spoke to say that he was detained outside of Duluth recently and told his story of where he is at in the process after that event; New Commissioner Shie said that she is not familiar with City operations and has questions of her own regarding ICE raids; Marsha said that if we have any questions regarding detainment or DPD operations that we can attend the upcoming Citizen Review Board meeting
 - iv. Secretary Harris wanted to make it a point to ask on the record if the Human Rights Commission can write any statements on the subject of ICE and by the time that any communication would go through the administration, it would need to be reviewed, and that it would not be a fast process; Vice Chair Ostrander offered an alternative of going through City Council meetings to get statements out or to speak out individually
 - v. Commissioner Shie asked if there is anything that we can personally do in this time and Secretary Harris mentioned the Interfaith Committee on Migrant Justice (ICMJ) has good resources and connections and to reach out to them; Commissioner Islas let the commission know that ACLU offers Know Your Rights training sessions; Vice Chair Ostrander mentioned that UMD is offering summer housing for international students
 - vi. Marsha reminded the Commission that any communications need to go through Laura Laaksonen, Human Rights Assistant and we can work to put together a resource sheet with contacts for emergency housing, tax help, legal assistance,

etc.; she will send the resource sheet to the Commissioners

8. Announcements and Upcoming Events

- a. Building Great Places hosted by Zeitgeist: Wednesday, May 28th - Noon to 2pm
 - i. To create accessible and equitable spaces
- b. Community Action Duluth block party in Lincoln Park: Thursday May 29th - 3 to 6pm
- c. Paws & People Community Care hosted by the Harm Reduction Sisters: Saturday, June 7th - 10am to 4pm - First Covenant Church
 - i. A collaboration between social work at UMD and the veterinary school in the Cities to provide healthcare services for the unhoused and their pets; breakfast provided at 10am (pet not required to attend)
- d. Trans Joy Fest at Park Point - Sunday, June 8th - 11am to 4pm
 - i. Commissioners Edgette and Harris are volunteering for the welcome shift
- e. On the radar: August 30th - Duluth-Superior Pride Festival 2025 at Bayfront

9. Additional Public Comments

- a. None at this time

10. Nominations and Elections of Officers

- a. An election of officers took place at the meeting as the former Chair is now the City's Human Rights & Equity Officer
 - i. Nominating Dr. Ostrander for Chair: Jaramillo-Kraemer, Shie, Islas, Harris
 - 1. Unanimous decision: The Chair of the Duluth Human Rights Commission is Dr. Nomi Ostrander
 - ii. Nominating Jen Maria Harris for Vice Chair: Jaramillo-Kraemer, Shie
 - 1. Unanimous decision: The Vice Chair for the Duluth Human Rights Commission is Jen Maria Harris
 - iii. Nominating Amanda Shie for Secretary: Harris, Shie, Ostrander
 - 1. Unanimous decision: The Secretary for the Duluth Human Rights Commission is Amanda Shie
- b. Commissioner Jaramillo-Kraemer asked if the Findings Committee will be affected with new officers elected and Chair Ostrander said that we will still need to meet monthly due to charter and if somebody new from the commission would like to join, we can rotate members off and on as needed

11. Adjourn

- a. Secretary Shie motions to adjourn; Chair Ostrander seconds. Meeting ends at 6:41 p.m.
 - i. Next meeting is Wednesday June 11th, 2025 at City Hall Room 430 at 5:30 p.m.

Minutes submitted by:
Jen Harris, Vice Chair

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.