



City of Northfield

City Hall
801 Washington Street
Northfield, MN 55057
northfieldmn.gov

Meeting Minutes - Final Human Rights Commission

Wednesday, June 28, 2023

6:00 PM

Council Chambers

6:00 PM - REGULAR AGENDA CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Wale called the meeting to order at 6:19 PM.

Present: 5 - Glenda Orrego, Barb Wornson, Jennie Autonoe, Martin Rosas and Adam Wale

Absent: 3 - Veronica Gamino, Bruce Morlan and Aidyn Plasch

ALSO PRESENT

*Tom Baraniak; Mar Valdecantos; Mayor Rhonda Pownell; City Administrator Ben Martig;
Risi Karim, Assistant to the City Administrator; Housing Coordinator Melissa Hanson;
Claudia Garcia, Staff Liaison; Judy Becker, Meeting Associate*

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Commissioner Autonoe, second by Youth Representative Rosas, to approve the Meeting Agenda. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 5 - Orrego, Wornson, Autonoe, Rosas and Wale

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[23-1187](#)

April 26, 2023 HRC Meeting Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Wornson, second by Commissioner Orrego, to approve the Minutes of the April 26, 2023 Meeting. Motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 5 - Orrego, Wornson, Autonoe, Rosas and Wale

Enactment No: M2023-103

OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT

None

REGULAR AGENDA

[23-1261](#)

2024 Board and Commission Appointment Process Update

Staff Liaison Garcia, in preparation for 2024 board and commission appointments, indicated that the terms for Commissioners Autonoe and Morlan are scheduled to expire on December 31, 2023; both Commissioners are eligible to apply for an additional term. In addition, the HRC has a vacant full-term position, set to expire December 31, 2026. The application process to apply for a board or commission officially begins on July 1,

2023; however, current members with terms expiring can reapply at any time. City Administrator Martig provided additional information and responded to questions from commissioners.

Mayor Pownell described the application process and encouraged members of the HRC to invite individuals to apply for a position on a board or commission if they are interested. The Mayor and Staff Liaison Garcia addressed various questions from commission members. City Council and staff are working towards more unified boards and commissions. The Ordinance establishing the Human Rights Commission states there shall be up to 14 voting members on the commission, making the HRC one of the larger commissions; the Bylaws, adopted in March 2018, indicate there are to be nine regular members and four youth members, with the number of voting members set at ten. The Mayor indicated the goal is to align most boards and commissions to a total of seven members in addition to youth representatives.

[23-1262](#)

Update on the Request of Beyond the Land Acknowledgement Statement Committee Seeking Partnership with Native Communities.

Risi Karim, Assistant to the City Administrator, provided an update on staff research and consideration of this item. Karim indicated the city already maintains several established mechanisms for communication, consultation, and collaboration with Native American communities. These mechanisms have proven to be effective in addressing concerns, fostering dialogue, and developing informal relationships; therefore, staff recommend that the HRC rescind the referenced motion and that the city continue to reinforce current collaborative mechanisms, respect for tribal sovereignty, and engage in meaningful community consultations to ensure effective and inclusive collaboration with Native American communities. For any issues that may arise with these communities that are brought to the HRC, the issue should be passed on to staff for further research.

Motion by Commissioner Wornson, second by Commissioner Autonoe, to rescind the prior action requesting Council action on seeking partnership with Native Communities. Motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 5 - Orrego, Wornson, Autonoe, Rosas and Wale

Enactment No: M2023-104

[23-1263](#)

Consider the Fair Housing Statement as Recommended by the Joint Subcommittee of the Housing and Redevelopment Authority and Human Rights Commission for the City of Northfield.

Melissa Hanson, Housing Coordinator, provided background information on the Joint Subcommittee of the Housing and Redevelopment Authority and the Human Rights Commission to develop a Fair Housing Statement for the City of Northfield to affirmatively further fair housing in the City of Northfield. Adopting a Fair Housing Statement would replace the annual requirement to adopt a resolution stating the city affirmatively furthers fair housing through its use of Federal and State housing funds. Hanson is working with the communications department to develop a web page to provide information to the public concerning the Fair Housing Statement and the process to follow when concerns are reported. Hanson responded to questions from the HRC as to the process with regards to affordable housing when developers approach the city.

City Administrator Martig outlined the procedure of action by the HRC to include public comment for any action taken.

Sabina Peters-Daywater, Northfield resident, addressed the Commission, indicating they feel the public is not familiar with what is defined as affordable housing. Hanson provided information on income guidelines as related to affordable housing and encouraged Peters-Daywater to contact them.

Commissioner Wornson questioned whether there is a shortage of affordable housing in Northfield. Hanson indicated a housing study was completed two years ago, and doesn't have the current numbers available.

Motion by Commissioner Wornson, second by Commissioner Orrego, to approve and support the Fair Housing Statement as recommended by the Joint Subcommittee of the Housing and Redevelopment Authority and the Human Rights Commission for the City of Northfield. Motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 5 - Orrego, Wornson, Autonoe, Rosas and Wale

Enactment No: M2023-106

23-1264

Discussion about member roles and appointment process in boards and committees.

City Administrator Martig indicated that this item is a continuation of an earlier agenda item brought to the HRC by a former HRC member, Mar Valdecantos, prior to that member's term ending. Three issues highlighted in this action are:

- * Youth member voting - bylaws currently allow for one youth voting member; if the youth voting member is absent, another youth member, agreed upon between youth members present, is allowed to vote as a proxy; Valdecantos proposes that all youth appointed to serve on a City board or commission be given voting rights;*
- * Non-Voting, Non-Youth members - Valdecantos expressed concern with the appointment of non-voting, non-youth members to boards and commissions and suggested formal criteria be implemented as to when members will be given non-voting, advisory or ex-officio roles, and that these roles be better defined;*
- * Appointment process - Valdecantos suggested that prospective applicants be interviewed by a committee, perhaps including a current member or Chair of the board or commission, rather than solely by the Mayor.*

Martig indicated that Administrative staff continue to work on revising governance documents for boards and commissions to ensure parity. The HRC could choose not to act on this item, could make a motion to forward Valdecantos' letter and other documents, to the City Council, or request that more research be done.

Mayor Pownell described their process for recommending board and commission appointments for approval by the City Council. Part of this process is encouraging council members, city staff and current board and commission members to reach out to individuals interested in serving the city through a board or commission. Pownell indicated many variables affect the appointment process.

Martig discussed statutory requirements and restrictions for youth voting and further discussed Charter City vs. Statutory City and requirements of the Northfield City Charter related to board and commission appointments. Currently the City Council cannot change the appointment process; if a change in the charter is recommended, the Charter Commission would need to be involved, and a referendum would be required.

Chair Wale received commission member comments and asked for public comment.

Mar Valdecantos spoke to the item previously discussed, seeking partnership with Native communities. They suggested perhaps a group created between city staff and community members to work on shared interests and issues and gave several suggestions.

Valdecantos expressed concern about HRC members transferred to non-voting status; they indicated their comments are not a judgment of the Mayor's performance and appreciates there is a more transparent system now, but believes involving other individuals in the interview process would be beneficial.

Chair Wale asked if there was a motion for the city council.

Motion by Commissioner Wornson, second by Youth Representative Rosas, that the HRC recommend that the City Council provide more clarification on establishing non-voting members. Discussion followed as to confusion about whether or not Youth Representative Rosas can vote if the voting Youth Representative is not present; staff replied in the affirmative. Motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 4 - Orrego, Wornson, Autonoe and Rosas

No: 1 - Wale

Motion by Commissioner Wornson to request the City Council require involvement from additional individual(s) in board and commission interviews. Chair Wale indicated that a motion of this matter is not within the City Charter. After additional discussion, Commissioner Autonoe seconded the motion. Motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 4 - Orrego, Wornson, Autonoe and Rosas

No: 1 - Wale

Motion by Commissioner Wornson, second by Commissioner Autonoe, to recommend that city council members be trained to be better able to review applications of individuals recommended by the Mayor for boards and commissions, and to consider deliberations during meetings where applications are presented. Chair Wale indicated that a motion of this matter is not within the City Charter. Motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 4 - Orrego, Wornson, Autonoe and Rosas

No: 1 - Wale

STAFF UPDATES

[23-1265](#)

Staff Report.

Staff Liaison Garcia introduced the staff report. Of particular note:

** 2023 Legislative Session Human Rights Related Updates, including several items where the Human Rights Commission had involvement. Martig stated staff will be meeting with the City Attorney to revise the city ordinance on the ban on conversion therapy to better align with the language in the House and Senate Files; any revision will be brought back to the HRC for review.*

** Hispanic Heritage Celebration, Saturday, September 16th; consider people to nominate as noteworthy Hispanic leaders in the community.*

** Board and Commission Training, Tuesday, October 24th; attendance required.*

** Holiday Social, Tuesday, December 12th, 5:00 p.m.; attendance required.*

- * *Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration, Monday, January 15, 2024, 5:00 p.m.*
- * *Economic Development: Main Street Grant.*
- * *El Super Barrio Latino, KYMN Radio.*
- * *Northfield Public Broadcasting Charter and Spectrum Channels 180 & 187 questions*

Garcia indicated that each subcommittee decides when to meet and any action to be taken; as Staff Liaison, Garcia is available to assist.

Garcia recommended that the HRC consider that no regular meetings be scheduled for July and August, 2024.

BOARD MEMBER AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner Autonoe indicated they will participate in the 2023 International Day of Peace on Thursday, September 21st; they are willing to include HRC information and would welcome HRC member assistance at their table. This is also the 75th anniversaries of both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide.

Commissioner Wornson stated that Commissioner Morlan would like members of the HRC to share a table with Rotary International at the International Day of Peace and use this event as a kicking off point in issuing passports for restaurants prior to the annual community gathering.

[23-1266](#)

Pride in the Park Subcommittee Update.

Garcia reported that the Pride in the Park event went well. Wale also commented. Sabina Peters-Daywater, Northfield resident, also commented positively on what they felt was a safe, family-oriented event. Martig discussed involvement of city staff and the process for applications for gatherings and for community events.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Commissioner Wornson, second by Youth Representative Rosas, to adjourn the meeting at 7:58 PM. Motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 5 - Orrego, Wornson, Autonoe, Rosas and Wale