



**CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**

New Commissioner Onboarding
Packet

Updated April 2024

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Welcome to the City of Grand Rapids Human Rights Commission!

Congratulations on your new positions as a City of Grand Rapids Human Rights Commissioner! We are grateful for your generous spirit in offering your time and energy to our mission of furthering equity and inclusion in our community.

This onboarding packet includes important information on the history and mission of the Human Rights Commission, educational resources and information on the history and mission of the Human Rights Commission. We are happy to further discuss any documents and answer questions.

Tenure on the commission is scheduled in three-year terms. Attendance is critical to maintaining momentum on projects, and it is expected that commissioners will attend at least 75% (9 of 12) regularly scheduled meetings. Commissioners may also contribute by volunteering for other workgroups on specific projects.

Your specific skills and experience will be important to our work. We are so excited to have you join the commission!

Sincerely,
Current City of Grand Rapids Human Rights Commission Members

Current Commissioners and Terms

Name	Current Term End
Angella Erickson – Chair	03/01/2026
Amy Blomquist – Vice Chair	03/01/2027
Rick Blake – City Council Rep	03/01/2025
R. D. Learmont	03/01/2025
Amanda Lussier	03/01/2025
Ronald Grossman	03/01/2025
Katelyn Dokken	03/01/2027
Peggy Clayton	03/01/2027
Joan Gunderman	03/01/2026
Chery Pierzina – Staff liaison	NA

Meeting Dates

The Human Rights Commission meets from 4:00—5:30pm on the last Wednesday of every month in the Council Chambers at City Hall – 420 N Pokegama Ave, Grand Rapids MN 55744.

Please note:

- Our meetings may end early or need to go later at times dependent on the agenda, guests, and other current events.
- Meetings will always start at 4:00pm unless posted in advance and with prior notice.
- Work sessions may be necessary for certain projects and other work the commission is trying to move forward. These will be decided on in advance.

City Ordinance Establishing Human Rights Commission

Council member Driscoll introduced the following Ordinance and moved for its adoption:

ORDINANCE NO. 04- 05-09

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS, MINNESOTA, ESTABLISHING GRAND RAPIDS CITY CODE CHAPTER 10 AND A HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION THE CITY COUNCIL OF GRAND RAPIDS, MINNESOTA ORDAINS:

Section 1. Grand Rapids City Code is hereby created by adding the following Section 1 entitled 'Human Rights Commission':

SEC. 1 HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION.

Subd. 1. Establishment and Composition. A Human Rights Commission, composed of seven (7) members, is hereby established for the purpose of securing for all citizens freedom from discrimination:

1. In employment because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, disability, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, and age;
2. In housing and real property because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, disability, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, and familial status;
3. In public accommodations because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, and disability;
4. In public services because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, and status with regard to public assistance; and
5. In education because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, disability, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, and age. Such discrimination threatens the rights and privileges of the inhabitants of this state and menaces the institutions and foundations of democracy.

It is also the purpose of the Human Rights Commission to protect all persons from wholly unfounded charges of discrimination. Nothing in this section shall be interpreted as restricting the implementation of positive action programs to combat discrimination.

It is also the purpose of the Human Rights Commission to secure for all citizens full participation in the affairs of the City by assisting the Minnesota Department of Human Rights in implementing State laws against discrimination and by advising the Council in long-range programs to improve community relations in the City of Grand Rapids.

Members shall be appointed by the Grand Rapids City Council for indefinite terms. An Administrative Assistant who is a permanent City staff person shall, and the City Attorney may, function as ex officio members of the Commission. It is desirable that Commission members be representative of the broad spectrum of the citizens of the City. Commission members should be willing to attend training sessions for the purpose of facilitating the discharge of their duties. Members shall serve without compensation.

Subd. 2. Meetings. Regular meetings shall be scheduled on a quarterly basis to handle regular Commission business and further efforts of information dissemination. Special meetings shall be held at the call of the Chairperson. Such business meetings shall be open for public attendance. Minutes shall be kept of all Commission proceedings. The Administrative Assistant shall be responsible for all minute and record-keeping duties. The Commission shall adopt its own bylaws after approval by the City Council.

Subd. 3. Quorum. No meeting shall be conducted by the Commission without a quorum, being a majority of all members, being present. The concurring vote of a majority of the Commissioners present shall be necessary for any action.

Subd. 4. Purpose and Duties of the Commission. The Human Rights Commission shall have the following purpose and duties:

- A. To initiate, implement, and administer the policies and regulations of the City with respect to preventing and prohibiting all unfair discriminatory practices based on race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, and disability status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, and age.
- B. To assess the human relations and civil rights needs of the community and to advise the administration and the City Council of the results of these assessments.
- C. To cooperate with other groups and governmental agencies concerned with human rights.
- D. The Human Rights Commission will not participate in the investigation, nor opinion rendering of human rights violation complaints. They will simply refer such matters to the Minnesota Department of Human Service.
- E. To take positive measures to disseminate the nondiscriminatory policies of the City with respect to all unfair discriminatory practices by conducting public information meetings.
- F. To initiate data collection and evaluation activities that will identify minority and lowincome concentrations within the City, and to prepare recommendations for submission to the planning Commission and Council that will contribute to lessening such concentrations, strengthen the fair housing policies of the City, and eliminate discrimination based on race, color, creed, religion, sex national origin, disability, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, and age.
- G. The commission shall have the power to seek outside funding sources in addition to any resources supplied by the City to assist in its mission. All outside monies or grants received by the commission are subject to the City' s Ordinance provisions, as well as within the discretion of the City Council to accept or reject.

Subd. 5. Duties of the Administrative Assistant. The duties of the City staff person designated as Administrative Assistant to the Commission by the Mayor shall be:

- A. To act as the authorized liaison representative of the Commission, both with complainants and the public in general for dissemination of non-discriminatory policies.
- B. In consultation and cooperative with the City Attorney, to interview and evaluate complainant charges of discriminatory acts, advise the complainant of his/ her rights, procedures for redress, responsibilities of the Commission and disposition alternatives in the case.
- C. To take minutes and keep official records of all Commission proceedings, and to function as correspondent for such communications with Federal and State agencies as are directed by the Commission.
- D. To conduct, or arrange to have conducted, such socio- economic research as is authorized

by the Commission to enable the Commissioners to function affirmatively and effectively in implementing the non-discriminatory policies of the City.

Subd. 6 Budget. The Human Rights Commission must establish a yearly budget for Grand Rapids City Council's consideration and approval. This budget must be submitted in accordance with the regular Grand Rapids City budgeting process on a yearly basis and it is to cover all expenses including but not limited to legal services, staffing, and all expenses related to publication or promotion of the commissions activities.

Section 2. After adoption, signing and attestation, this ordinance shall be published once in the official newspaper of the City and shall be in effect on and after the date following such publication.

Adopted by the City Council of Grand Rapids, Minnesota, this 24 day of May 2004.

FOR ADOPTION: Driscoll, Erkkila, Drake, Zeige

AGAINST ADOPTION: Schlauderaff

Susan Zeige, Mayor ATTEST: Edward Treska, City Administrator/Clerk

(Published in the Grand Rapids Herald Review on May 30, 2004)

Articles of Incorporation and By-laws

GRAND RAPIDS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION AMENDED BYLAWS OF

ARTICLE ONE

The office of the Commission shall be located in the City Hall, City of Grand Rapids, County of Itasca, State of Minnesota.

ARTICLE TWO

The Commission shall meet monthly at such time and place as agreed upon by a majority of the Commission. Meetings shall be rescheduled when they conflict with major holidays. The chair or any two commissioners together may call special meetings of the Commission as deemed appropriate, on 72 hours written notice to all members of the Commission. No business shall be conducted at a special meeting that was not state in the written notice of the special meeting. All notices of meetings shall comply with the Minnesota's open meeting law.

ARTICLE THREE

The Commission has nine commissioners, there were originally seven commissioners but that number was modified by the City Council on August 8th, 2005. Each commissioner shall have been appointed by the Grand Rapids City Council and the normal term of office shall be three years, with each of three classes of three commissioners each having staggered terms. Commissioners who are

appointed to the Commission to fill an unexpired term shall be appointed to the unexpired portion of the previous commissioner's term.

ARTICLE FOUR

Each commissioner present shall be entitled to one vote in the actions and decisions of the Commission. A quorum is necessary in all voting by the Commission. A majority of commissioners shall constitute a quorum at meetings of the Commission. Any action taken or decision made must be by a majority vote of commissioners present.

ARTICLE FIVE

The elective officers of the Commission shall be a chair, a vice-chair, a secretary, and a treasurer. The election of officers shall take place annually at the time and place of the March meeting of the Commission. A candidate for office must be nominated by a commissioner, seconded by at least one other commissioner, and the officer nominee must agree to hold such position. Any commissioner shall be eligible for office, but only commissioners who are present shall be entitled to vote. Candidates who receive a majority of votes so cast shall be elected.

ARTICLE SIX

The chair shall be the chief officer of the Commission. The chair shall perform or delegate to the vice-chair all duties necessarily incident to the office including but not limited to, organizing meetings, meeting with outside community organizations or persons, and providing overall leadership for the Commission. In the event the chair is absent from a meeting or unable to attend to a duty, the vice-chair shall have the authority to appoint commissioners to task-focused committees. Said committees shall follow the requirements on Minnesota's Open Meeting Law.

ARTICLE SEVEN

The vice-chair shall perform the duties of the chair in the absence or at the request of the chair. The vice-chair shall assist the chair in planning, administering, and conducting Commission business.

ARTICLE EIGHT

A city-designated administrative assistant shall be responsible for recording meetings of the commission and maintaining a roll of commission members, however, in the absence of a city administrative assistant, the secretary shall keep a complete record of all proceedings of the Commission and the roll of the members of the Commission. The secretary shall also perform all other duties usually pertaining to the position of secretary, and shall include responsibility for commission communication including writing applications for grants or cooperative activities for special projects or activities, including working with the treasurer on the related financial aspects thereof. In the event the secretary is absent from a meeting, the chair shall appoint a secretary pro tempore to record the proceedings of the Commission meeting. Minutes of each meeting shall be submitted to the City Council, City Administrator and City Clerk by the administrative assistant will be mailed or e-mailed to all commission members by the administrative assistant to all Commission members one week before the next scheduled meeting.

ARTICLE NINE

A city-designated administrative assistant shall be responsible for routine treasury functions and financial reporting, however, in the absence of a city administrative assistant, the treasurer shall have access to and report all financial transactions of the Commission and shall submit a report of all

disbursements and other commitments of the Commission. The report is to be mailed or e-mailed out with the minutes one week before each meeting and shall be reviewed at each monthly meeting. The treasurer shall work with the secretary to develop the financial aspects when developing grant requests or commission programs and projects

ARTICLE TEN

A yearly budget shall be prepared and established by the treasurer in accordance with the regular city budgeting process subject to the agreement of the commission at a regular or special commission meeting for City Council consideration and be subject to City Council approval. Budgeted funds may be used for the following:

1. Workshops for commissioners;
2. Public Relations;
3. Educational purposes;
4. Grants for services with the purpose of promoting Human Rights issues;
5. Participation in organizational events;
6. Enrichments and awards;
7. Memberships in organizations;
8. Per diems for commissioners;
9. Other items deemed appropriate and in conformance with the municipal code.

ARTICLE ELEVEN

At the monthly meetings of the Commission, the order of business shall in general be as follows:

1. Call to order;
2. Welcome guests;
3. Approval of or amendments to meeting agenda;
4. Minutes of preceding meeting and action thereon;
5. Treasurer's report;
6. Correspondence;
7. Public Comments;
8. Old business;
9. New business;
10. Reports on calls and inquiries;
11. Pending complaints;
12. Adjournment.

The sequential order of business may be adjusted or revised by the commission near the beginning of each meeting during agenda approval.

ARTICLE TWELVE

Every member of the Commission shall be required to attend at least seventy-five percent of all meetings each calendar year. Commission members who are unable to meet the attendance requirement will be deemed to have resigned from the Commission. Any member of the Commission may voluntarily terminate membership by submitting a written resignation to the chair and the City Council.

ARTICLE THIRTEEN

These Bylaws may be amended by the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the commissioners at any regular meeting of the Commission, provided notice of such amendment or amendments and the nature thereof shall have been given to the members at least one month prior to the date of the

meeting at which said amendment or amendments are to be presented for consideration. The proposed amendment(s) must meet with the approval of the Grand Rapids City Council.

ARTICLE FOURTEEN

If any provisions of these Bylaws with respect to the objectives or activities of the Commission as established by Ordinance No. 04-05-09 dated May 24, 2004 establishing the Commission, or with Grand Rapids Municipal Code DIVISION 6 – HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION Sections 2-301, 2-302, 2-304, then the provisions of the city ordinance and municipal code shall prevail unless and until such city ordinance and municipal code have been duly amended.

ARTICLE FIFTEEN

The foregoing constitute the Bylaws of the Grand Rapids Human Rights Commission as amended at the regular meeting of the commissioners, duly held on September 26, 2018.

ADOPTED AND PASSED BY THE City Council of the City of Grand Rapids on the 22nd day of October, 2018.

Dale Adams, Mayor Attest: Kimberly Gibeau, City Clerk

Abridged and Relevant Sections of Rules Related to Activities of the Human Rights Commission

DIVISION 2-V-6 HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

2-301 Establishment And Composition

A human rights commission is hereby established for the purpose of securing for all citizens freedom from discrimination:

- a) In employment because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, disability, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, and age;
 - a. In housing and real property because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, disability, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, and familial status;
 - b. In public accommodations because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, and disability;
 - c. In public services because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, and status with regard to public assistance; and
 - d. In education because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, disability, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, and age. Such discrimination threatens the rights and privileges of the inhabitants of this state and menaces the institutions and foundations of democracy.

- b) It is also the purpose of the human rights commission to protect all persons from wholly unfounded charges of discrimination. Nothing in this section shall be interpreted as restricting the implementation of positive action programs to combat discrimination.
- c) It is also the purpose of the human rights commission to secure for all citizens full participation in the affairs of the city by assisting the Minnesota Department of Human Rights in implementing state laws against discrimination and by advising the council in long-range programs to improve community relations in the city.
- d) Members shall be appointed by the city council for indefinite terms. An administrative assistant who is a permanent city staff person shall, and the city attorney may, function as ex officio members of the commission. It is desirable that commission members be representative of the broad spectrum of the citizens of the city. Commission members should be willing to attend training sessions for the purpose of facilitating the discharge of their duties. Members shall serve without compensation.

(Ord. No. 04-05-09, § 1(1), 5-24-2004; Ord. No. 05-08-13, 8-8-2005)

2-302 Meetings

- a) Regular meetings of the human rights commission shall be scheduled on a quarterly basis to handle regular commission business and further efforts of information dissemination. Special meetings shall be held at the call of the chair. Such business meetings shall be open for public attendance. Minutes shall be kept of all commission proceedings. The administrative assistant shall be responsible for all minute and record-keeping duties. The commission shall adopt its own bylaws after approval by the city council.
- b) No meeting shall be conducted by the commission without a quorum, being a majority of all members, being present. The concurring vote of a majority of the commissioners present shall be necessary for any action.

(Ord. No. 04-05-09, § 1(2, 3), 5-24-2004)

2-303 Purpose And Duties

The human rights commission shall have the following purpose and duties and shall comply with the following:

- a) To initiate, implement, and administer the policies and regulations of the city with respect to preventing and prohibiting all unfair discriminatory practices based on race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, and disability status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, and age.
- b) To assess the human relations and civil rights needs of the community and to advise the administration and the city council of the results of these assessments.
- c) To cooperate with other groups and governmental agencies concerned with human rights.
- d) The human rights commission will not participate in the investigation, nor opinion rendering of human rights violation complaints. It will simply refer such matters to the Minnesota Department of Human Service.
- e) To take positive measures to disseminate the nondiscriminatory policies of the city with respect to all unfair discriminatory practices by conducting public information meetings.
- f) To initiate data collection and evaluation activities that will identify minority and low-income concentrations within the city, and to prepare recommendations for submission to the planning commission and council that will contribute to lessening such concentrations, strengthen the fair housing policies of the city, and eliminate discrimination based on race, color, creed,

religion, sex national origin, disability, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, and age.

- g) The commission shall have the power to seek outside funding sources in addition to any resources supplied by the city to assist in its mission. All outside monies or grants received by the commission are subject to ordinance, as well as within the discretion of the city council to accept or reject.

(Ord. No. 04-05-09, § 1(4), 5-24-2004)

2-304 Duties Of The Administrative Assistant

The duties of the city staff person designated as administrative assistant to the human rights commission by the mayor shall be:

- a) To act as the authorized liaison representative of the commission, both with complainants and the public in general for dissemination of nondiscriminatory policies.
- b) In consultation and cooperative with the city attorney, to interview and evaluate complainant charges of discriminatory acts, advise the complainant of his/her rights, procedures for redress, responsibilities of the commission and disposition alternatives in the case.
- c) To take minutes and keep official records of all commission proceedings, and to function as correspondent for such communications with federal and state agencies as are directed by the commission.
- d) To conduct, or arrange to have conducted, such socio-economic research as is authorized by the commission to enable the commissioners to function affirmatively and effectively in implementing the nondiscriminatory policies of the city.

(Ord. No. 04-05-09, § 1(5), 5-24-2004)

2-305 Budget

The human rights commission must establish a yearly budget for the city council's consideration and approval. This budget must be submitted in accordance with the regular city budgeting process on a yearly basis and it is to cover all expenses including but not limited to legal services, staffing, and all expenses related to publication or promotion of the commission's activities.

(Ord. No. 04-05-09, § 1(6), 5-24-2004)

Current Work Plan

The City of Grand Rapids Human Rights Commission reviews and recommends potential activities, partnerships, relationships, and opportunities on an annual basis to further its mission of promoting a community of harmony and respect for the rights and dignity of all. These activities are outlined in a working document where the goal/activity is associated with an ordinance and cost when appropriate. During the year, adjustments may be made to reflect changes in costs, changes in priorities, changes in format or delivery methods, or identification of human rights concerns that were not identified in compiling the preceding list but which the Commission feels need to be addressed.

Examples include:

- a. Possible adjustments could occur due to identifying new or incidental human rights concerns related to protected groups and areas from the [Minnesota Human Rights](#) and other state statutes and regulations:

Protected Classes	Protected Area
RACE	Employment, housing, public accommodations, public services, education, credit, and business
COLOR	Employment, housing, public accommodations, public services, education, credit, and business
CREED	Employment, housing, public accommodations, public services, education, and credit
RELIGION	Employment, housing, public accommodations, public services, education, and credit
NATIONAL ORIGIN	Employment, housing, public accommodations, public services, education, credit, and business
SEX	Employment, housing, public accommodations, public services, education, credit, and business
MARITAL STATUS	Employment, housing, public accommodations, education, and credit
DISABILITY	Employment, housing, public accommodations, public services, education, credit, and business
PUBLIC ASSISTANCE	Employment, housing, public services, education, credit
AGE	Employment and education
SEXUAL ORIENTATION	Employment, housing, public accommodations, public services, education, credit, and business
FAMILIAL STATUS	Employment, Housing
LOCAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION ACTIVITY	Employment

- b. Adjustments could occur as a result of use of alternative education/training delivery methods such as print, seminars, webinars, speeches, and others

Resources

MN Department of Human Rights

The MN Department of Human Rights protects the civil rights of Minnesotans through the Minnesota Human Rights Act, one of the strongest civil rights laws in the country, to ensure Minnesotans can live free from discrimination.

- [Reporting Discrimination](#) – the City of Grand Rapids Human Rights Commission does not investigate reports of discrimination. These are sent and filed with the State of Minnesota.
- [History](#) – Provides an overview of the history of the Department, changes to the Minnesota Human Rights Act, significant court decisions, and federal civil rights changes.
- [MN Human Rights Act](#) – The Minnesota Human Rights Act is the state law prohibiting discrimination in Minnesota and is enforced by the Minnesota Department of Human Rights. It is one of the strongest and most comprehensive civil rights laws in the country. The state law prohibits discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, public services, education, credit, and business based on protected class, such as: race, religion, disability, national origin, sex, marital status, familial status, age, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

Open Meeting Law

The Minnesota Open Meeting Law was enacted in 1957, and is now codified in Minnesota Statutes, chapter 13D. The law requires that meetings of governmental bodies generally be open to the public. Ultimately, open meeting laws are designed to ensure transparency and openness in government proceedings.

Some helpful resources:

- [MN House Research – Minnesota Open Meeting Law, updated October 2021](#): This publication discusses the groups and types of meetings covered by the open meeting law (page 2), and then reviews the requirements of (page 6) and exceptions to the law (page 10), the penalties for its violation (page 14), and sources of advice (page 15).
 - o *The Minnesota Supreme Court has articulated three purposes of the open meeting law: 1) To prohibit actions being taken at a secret meeting where it is impossible for the interested public to become fully informed about a public board's decisions or to detect improper influences, 2) To assure the public's right to be informed 3) To afford the public an opportunity to present its views to the public body*
- [MN Statute 13D– Minnesota Open Meeting Law](#): Official publication of the State of Minnesota Revisor of Statutes

Data Practices

The Data Practices Act (Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 13) presumes that all government data are public. State or federal law must specifically classify data for the government to limit access. The Act also describes government's duty to respond to data requests made by a member of the public or by the subject of the data.

- [MN Government Data Practices Act – One Pager](#)

- “Government data” means all data collected, created, received, maintained or disseminated by state or local government, regardless of its physical form, storage media, or conditions of use. Paper documents, email, CDROMs, videotape, and computer files are all forms of “government data.”
 - Anyone can make a request to view or receive copies of government data. Public data are available to anyone for any reason and private or nonpublic data are available if the requester is the subject of the data being requested. Confidential or protected nonpublic data are available only to those government employees who require access to it for work-related reasons.
- [Laws and Rules – MN Department of Administration](#)