

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
July 8, 2025

DATE: Tuesday, July 8, 2025

TIME: 4:30 PM

LOCATION: Multicultural Family Center, 1157 Central Avenue, Dubuque, IA 52001

The meeting was called to order at 4:36 pm.

Commissioners Present: Jake Kurczek, Matthew Zanger, Michaela Freiburger, Dave Heiar, DeLano Cain Watson, Traci Phillipson, Nikkii Nutter

Commissioners Absent: Luzelena Bravo, Rick Baumhover

Staff Present: Gisella Aiken Shadle, Chief of Equity and Human Rights; Ann Marie Jannette, Equity and Human Rights Specialist

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve the minutes as submitted from the May 13, 2025, meeting by Heiar, seconded by Zanger. All in favor.

Motion to approve the subcommittee minutes as submitted from the May 27, 2025, meeting by Freiburger, seconded by Watson. All in favor.

Public Input

One member of the public was in attendance but did not offer input.

Reports

Caseload Report

- Complaints filed – number of complaints that were signed during the month
 - June amount: 2
- Active investigations – investigations that are currently active but in various stages (active, administrative review, initiated, on hold, etc.)
 - June amount: 13
- Incidents in mediation – complaints currently in mediation
 - June amount: 1
- Incidents in full hearing – complaints in full hearing process
 - June amount: 0
- Inquiries – calls/inquiries that don't result in an official complaint being filed (including outreach events)
 - June amount: 9

- Complaints closed during the month – signed complaints that were closed during the month (doesn't include inquiries or complaints that were never filed)
 - June amount: 0
- Total inquiries and complaints FY25 – signed complaints filed in FY25
 - June amount: 188

Example of OHR complaint received in June 2025:

The complainant met with the respondent, her supervisor, to discuss an incident in which the complainant was going to be written up. The respondent said that the level of the write-up would be dependent on the complainant's plan and whether she had thought about looking for another job. The complainant replied that she was interested in another job in another department. The respondent replied that she can't apply for that because she's not qualified. The complainant replied that she was qualified according to the job description. The respondent said, "Well, you're going to be retiring soon anyway, aren't you? How old are you anyway?"

On several other occasions the respondent commented on the complainant's many years of service. She also commented frequently on another colleague's many years of service and wanted to know when she was going to retire. The complainant believes she has been discriminated against in the area of employment on the basis of age.

Director's Report

Aitken-Shadle reported that the department is meeting with an internal team weekly to report on the progress being made in regard to compliance for the HF856 Bill. There is a list of 17 words on the HF856 bill that the City is steering away from.

Aitken-Shadle reported staff plus Baumhover and Phillipson attended the DBQ Pride and the Juneteenth events with a table for outreach to the community. The department will not have an outreach table at the fair this year but the department will revisit the idea in the fall during budget season. The department will also not have an outreach table that DBQFest because the date conflicts with another outreach event being attended. Upcoming outreach events in August include the Back to School Bash on August 2, the National Night Out on August 5, and the Crescent Health and Wellness Fair on August 9. Jannette will send an email to the commission for commissioners to sign up to help at these events.

Aitken-Shadle reported that Mayor Cavanaugh called a special meeting for Monday July 14 to further discuss the Equity and Human Rights Ordinance changes. The ordinance that was passed by the City Council on July 7 included the removal of gender identity as a protected class. The redlined document was not presented to City Council so they couldn't review it thoroughly and passed it not knowing that gender identity had been removed. A discussion was held regarding the fact that the commission was not informed ahead of time that gender identity was going to be removed and the fact that City Council did not seek the consultation of the commission beforehand. Further discussion was held regarding the possibility of holding a special commission meeting before the special meeting is held on July 14 so that the commission can formulate a response for the City Council meeting.

Chairperson's Report

Chairperson Kurczek reported that he met with the Dubuque library regarding a defacto day shelter for the unhoused. He will be a member of the homeless advisory coalition which will form broader coalitions and subgroups.

Old Business:

Fiscal Year 2026 began on July 1, 2025, which starts a new budget year for City departments. The FY26 budget is not able to absorb the cost of a commission planned event. Therefore, no update was provided.

Motion to approve the updated SWOT analysis and FY26 commission goals by Heiar, seconded by Zanger. All in favor.

New Business:

Motion to approve the updated SWOT analysis and FY26 commission goals by Heiar, seconded by Zanger. All in favor.

Jannette reported that subcommittees can only have four or fewer members attend, otherwise it is considered a commission meeting and needs to be considered as such in reference to quorum, etc.

Heiar told of an upcoming event at Voices Studio entitled "Expressions of the Soul: Art, Voice, and Vision". The event will feature programming and stories from people who have experienced racial violence. The event will take place throughout August and September.

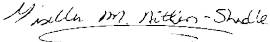
Reflections and Updates

Freiburger noted that private entities seem to be increasingly worrying about belonging and human rights and asked what the commission's role is facilitating conversations. Heiar noted that the Juneteenth event was a very good event especially after the protesters ended their march at the event. Also, the Friday event for Juneteenth was very informative.

Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn by Watson, seconded by Heiar. All in favor. The meeting ended at 5:47 p.m.

The next regularly scheduled meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 12, 2025, at 4:30 p.m., at the Multicultural Family Center.

Minutes approved as submitted:  _____

Minutes approved as corrected: _____