

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
August 12, 2025

DATE: Tuesday, August 12, 2025

TIME: 4:30 PM

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

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 pm.

Commissioners Present: Jake Kurczek, Matthew Zanger, Michaela Freiburger, Dave Heiar, Traci Phillipson, Nikki Nutter, Luzelena Bravo, Rick Baumhover

Commissioners Absent: DeLano Cain Watson

Staff Present: Gisella Aiken Shadle, Chief of Human Rights

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve the minutes as submitted from the July 8, 2025 meeting. All in favor.

Public Input

No members of the public were in attendance. Kurczek discussed the intention of the Dubuque Area Land and Water Legacy, who had originally planned on attending, which included 12 recommendations for the new City council Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The commission discussed the formation of a subcommittee to review the recommendations and bring back their recommendations to the next commission meeting in September.

Reports

Caseload Report

- Complaints filed – number of complaints that were signed during the month
 - July amount: 1
- Active investigations – investigations that are currently active but in various stages (active, administrative review, initiated, on hold, etc.)
 - July amount: 15
- Incidents in mediation – complaints currently in mediation
 - July amount: 0
- Incidents in full hearing – complaints in full hearing process
 - July amount: 0
- Inquiries – calls/inquiries that don't result in an official complaint being filed (including outreach events)
 - July amount: 13
- Complaints closed during the month – signed complaints that were closed during the month (doesn't include inquiries or complaints that were never filed)
 - July amount: 0

- Total inquiries and complaints FY25 – signed complaints filed in FY25
 - July amount: 14

Example of EHR complaint received in June 2025:

Complainant, who is Black, was being trained by the manager, who is white, when the manager commented to the complainant that she was going to "work her like a slave." Complainant was uncomfortable and insulted by this comment. On another occasion, the complainant had an altercation with a different manager. That manager screamed at the complainant because she was helping her son instead of working. The manager told the complainant to leave and go clock out.

The complainant then called the owner to report the incident. He asked the complaint if she could work different hours to which the complainant agreed. The next day, the complainant received a text from him stating that they didn't need her anymore based on the hours she's available to work. The complainant feels she was fired because of her race.

Freiburger and the commission discussed the possibility of creating a resolution to publicly state that the city does not tolerate racism, bigotry, and homophobic comments. They considered the importance of being proactive and ensuring community members feel supported. Nutter suggested putting out a general statement of solidarity with the community in the media to increase visibility and let people know the commission is there to support them. Aitken-Shadle mentioned the need to follow the correct procedure, including screening by the City Manager and Communications Officer. A discussion was held over whether a subcommittee should be formed to create a resolution to be voted on at the September commission meeting.

Director's Report

The commission discussed updating the "Know Your Rights" brochure to provide better guidance on how and when to file a discrimination complaint.

Aitken-Shadle presented the changes to the Human Rights Commission's mission statement and department landing pages on the website. Aitken-Shadle asked for commissioners to review and report on any changes they feel should be made at the September meeting.

Copies of the recently passed new ordinance was handed out. The ordinance is in effect but hasn't been posted yet as it is awaiting codification which will be done by City Council in the fourth quarter of the year. Also, updated sections of the commission handbook were handed out as well as a red-lined version of one of the chapters to update communication guidelines between the commission, staff, and city council. Aitken-Shadle asked for the creation of a subcommittee to review proposed changes.

The Equity Grant has been revamped and is now the Community Support and Empowerment Grant. The new grant is currently being worked on and is awaiting approval from the City Manager. Job descriptions for Aitken-Shadle and Jannette have also been updated to match the new focus of the department. Equity Goals have been revamped into Access, Belonging, and Community (ABC) Goals. Each department has been met with one-on-one to discuss compliance with the HF856 bill. Aitken-Shadle is waiting to hear from the City Attorney's office whether they can move forward with rolling out the revamped Language Access Plan (which will be an internal administrative policy).

Chairperson's Report

Nothing to report.

Old Business:

No old business.

New Business:

Subcommittees were formed. The subcommittee for reviewing Commission Handbook will consist of Heiar and Phillipson. The subcommittee for reviewing Dubuque Area Land Water Legacy Resolution recommendations will consist of Freiburger and Zanger. The subcommittee for updating the Know Your Rights brochure consists of Phillipson, Freiburger, and Baumhover.

Upcoming Outreach Events

Baumhover volunteered to attend the Senior Expo with staff. Heiar and Phillipson volunteered to attend Latinx Fiesta.

Upcoming Cultural Events

Zanger and Heiar strongly recommended visiting the Voices studio for their Expressions of the Soul: Art, Voices, and Vision events coming up in September

Reflections and Updates

Aitken-Shadle reported that the Latino community in the area is very concerned that the National Guard is being called to act with ICE.

Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn by Freiburger, seconded by Baumhover. All in favor. The meeting ended at 6:00 p.m.

The next regularly scheduled meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 9, 2025, at 4:30 p.m., at the Multicultural Family Center.

Minutes approved as submitted: 

Minutes approved as corrected: _____