



CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, July 29, 2026
4:00 PM

MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission of the Grand Rapids Human Rights Commission is to promote a community of harmony and respect for the rights and dignity of all.

CALL TO ORDER: Pursuant to due notice and call thereof, the Human Rights Commission will hold a regular meeting on Wednesday, July 29, 2026, at 4:00pm in City Hall Council Chambers at 420 North Pokegama Avenue, Grand Rapids, Minnesota.

Commission Chair Miller called the meeting to order at 4:00pm.

ROLL CALL:

PRESENT: Commissioner Doug Learmont, Council Representative Molly MacGregor, Commissioner Janet Miller, Commissioner Stella Leone, Commissioner Renee Ducharme

ABSENT: Commissioner Ronald Grossman, Commissioner Brittany Pope-Sears

City Staff: Recorder/Administrative Assistant Cynthia Lyman

PUBLIC INPUT (if anyone wishes to address the Commission):

SETTING THE AGENDA: (This is an opportunity to approve the regular agenda as presented or add/delete an Agenda item by a majority vote of the Commission members present.)

Motion made by Commissioner Leone, Seconded by Commissioner Ducharme to approve the agenda as written. Voting Yea: Commissioner Learmont, Council Representative MacGregor, Commissioner Miller, Commissioner Leone, Commissioner Ducharme. Motion passed

PRESENTATION:

1. Daycare Discussion by Vicki Janae Sofner Rebekah Zemansky Higginbotham

Both Vicki Janae Sofner and Rebekah Zemansky Higginbotham came to bring awareness to the Commission about daycare issues. Vicki is a Provider Support Specialist at the State of MN with 15 years of experience, with much knowledge and survey results showing rural and city comparison costs. Rebekah is new to the area, has a degree but is a stay-at-home mother and expressed the difficulty finding providers in the area that do not have a waiting list.

APPROVE MINUTES:

2. Approve June 24th, Minutes

Motion made by Commissioner Ducharme, Seconded by Commissioner Learmont to approve the June 24th, 2026, Minutes. Voting Yea: Commissioner Learmont, Council Representative MacGregor, Commissioner Miller, Commissioner Leone, Commissioner Ducharme. Motion passed.

BUSINESS:

3. 2026 Workplan

Council Representative MacGregor stated that there will be no Braver Angels. Commissioner Leone would like to get a small group together in the community for the Dissolve the Divide. Commissioner Ducharme will be going to one of the upcoming Building Bridges and will report back to the Commission. She also mentioned that she reached out to the Blandin Foundation for grants for 2027 but needs to know the need for each event.

4. Walk for Life

Commission Chair Miller said that the 9th Annual Walk for Life Rally, will be coming up on September 10th, 2026, and all are welcome to come and join. She would like to get the Human Rights Commission banners from Chery Pierzina to use. Commissioner Ducharme is interested in volunteering.

5. Minnesota Exhibits

The Commission discussed the fliers regarding the Traveling Exhibits for Green Card Voices. Commissioner Ducharme said that the exhibit would look great at the Reif. The Commission will stay in touch with Green Card Voices, reach out to the Reif and brainstorm other places such as the MacRostie where the exhibit could be held.

UPDATES:

6. Story-Stitch

This item was still on the agenda, and the Commission said that they could possibly host an event at a later date for Story Stitch as they have the cards.

7. City and County Updates

The Commission discussed that both Dale Adams and Tasha Connelly filed for the upcoming election. The City Council is working on budgets.

8. -Interfaith Workgroup: Commissioner Grossman is absent for this update.

-Community Engagement/Education and/or Internal Collaboration: Commission Chair Miller and Council Representative Molly MacGregor.
Commissioner Leone spoke with Fire in the Village about having a conversation. They said that they would not come here, but the Human Rights Commission would be welcome to go there and discuss what is appropriate for Indigenous People's Day for 2027. The tentative date for a potluck would be September 15th, 2026, at 6pm and all will be welcome to attend.

-Indigenous People's Day: Commissioners Leone, Ducharme, Pope-Sears, Grossman: This workgroup discussed with Community Engagement.

CALLS/COMPLAINTS/INQUIRIES:

None.

SET AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING:

Before the next Agenda was discussed Commission Chair Miller said that she will be absent for the August 26th meeting and that Commission Vice Chair DuCharme will need to take over.

PRESENTATION - Karter Starling

BUSINESS:

3) 2026 Workplan

4) Minnesota Exhibits/Story Stitch

5) NAMI Walk for Mental Health - Oct 3rd

UPDATES:

6) Walk for Life

7) City and County Updates

8) Work Groups:

- Community Engagement/Education and/or Internal Collaboration - Commission Chair Miller and Council Representative Molly MacGregor

- Interfaith: Commissioner Grossman

- Indigenous People's Day: Commissioners Leone, Ducharme, Pope-Sears, Grossman

ADJOURN:

The meeting adjourned at 5:25pm.

Respectfully submitted by Cynthia Lyman