

CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MEETING AGENDA

**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.

ROLL CALL:

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.)

PRESENTATION:

1. Daycare Discussion by Vicki Janae Sofner Rebekah Zemansky Higginbotham

APPROVE MINUTES:

- [2.](#) Approve June 24th, Minutes

BUSINESS:

- [3.](#) 2026 Workplan
4. Walk for Life
- [5.](#) Minnesota Exhibits

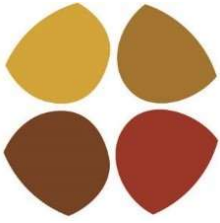
UPDATES:

- [6.](#) Story-Stitch
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

CALLS/COMPLAINTS/INQUIRIES:

SET AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING:

ADJOURN:



CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, June 24, 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, June 24th, 2026, at 4:00pm in City Hall Council Chambers at 420 North Pokegama Avenue, Grand Rapids, Minnesota.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Miller at 4pm.

ROLL CALL:

PRESENT: Commissioner Doug Learmont, Commissioner Janet Miller, Commissioner Stella Leone, Commissioner Renee Ducharme, Commissioner Ronald Grossman, Commissioner Brittany Pope-Sears

ABSENT: Council Representative Molly MacGregor

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

None

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 Pope-Sears to approve the agenda as written. Voting Yea: Commissioner Learmont, Commissioner Miller, Commissioner Leone, Commissioner Ducharme, Commissioner Pope-Sears, Commissioner Grossman, Motion Passed.

PRESENTATION:

1. Daycare Discussion by Vicki Janae Sofner and Rebekah Zemansky Higginbotham

The presentation will be moved to the meeting in July.

APPROVE MINUTES:

2. Approve May 27th, 2026, Minutes

Motion made by Commissioner Ducharme, Seconded by Commissioner Leone to approve the minutes from May 27th, 2026. Voting Yea: Commissioner Learmont, Commissioner Grossman, Commissioner Miller, Commissioner Leone, Commissioner Ducharme, Commissioner Pope-Sears. Motion Passed.

FINANCIALS:

None

BUSINESS:

3. New Election - Vice Chair

Motion made by Commissioner Leone, seconded by Commissioner Pope-Sears to elect Commissioner Ducharme to Vice Chair, taking the place of Commissioner Leone. Voting Yea: Commissioner Learmont, Commissioner Miller, Commissioner Leone, Commissioner Ducharme, Commissioner Grossman, Commissioner Pope-Sears. Motion Passed.

4. 2026 Workplan

Commission Chair Miller discussed that they are on schedule with the workplan. She needs to check with Commissioner MacGregor for the Braver Angels. She has also said that she has done two presentations so far and there were other groups such as the Rotary and ISD318 that the presentation could be shown. It was suggested to keep a record of the presentations given. It was also said that the Commission could revisit protective classes and that due to no budget, they should investigate the application process and deadlines of grants.

UPDATES:

5. Itasca Pride

The festival went well and many thanks to the Human Rights Commissioners who assisted with the pancake breakfast.

6. Juneteenth

Juneteenth banners were up, even though they were a little faded and Kootasca put on a walk.

7. New Events:

- 4 Directions Festival
- ADA Pride Month - July
- Dissolve the Divide

Commissioner Leone spoke to a variety of people regarding the 4 Directions Festival, Indigenous People's Day and received similar responses that most will not participate for free. Commissioners agreed that events work better when there are more partners involved, but funding will be an issue. If another group has something in mind for the Indigenous People's Day, the Human Rights Commission would support them. The workgroup may try to meet with Band members regarding the event but will have to have less than a quorum to meet, even at their location.

Commissioner Pope-Sears said that the ADA Pride Month was in July and at this time she would like to put it on the work plan for 2027.

Dissolve the Divide is going to be held off for a bit and maybe have a round table discussion about safety and creating a harmonious community and the perceptions about the community from others.

8. City & Council Updates
 - GR Area Human Rights Fund Draft-Community Foundation

Commissioner Learmont thought that everything about the Fund Draft with the Community Foundation was moving along and that it was very close. It was found via email that the city was not in favor of an account being set up for the Human Rights Commission through the Community Foundation. The Commission would like some clarification from Council Representative MacGregor regarding the discussion to stop moving forward with the Fund Draft.

9. - Community Engagement/Education and/or Internal Collaboration: Commission Chair Miller and Council Representative MacGregor
 - Interfaith: Commissioner Grossman
 - Indigenous People's Day: Commissioners Leone, Ducharme, Pope-Sears and Grossman

A) Commission Chair Miller said earlier that she has done two presentations and will be doing another one sometime from July to September.

B) Commissioner Grossman said that even though one of the pastor's that he spoke with is committed to assisting vulnerable people, it is very slow going, but it will be worth it when things start to line up.

C) This work group is seriously considering speaking with the area Bands regarding Indigenous People's Day. They may meet with them but realize that they must go with a group that is less than a quorum and can't speak about any pertinent information.

CALLS/COMPLAINTS/INQUIRIES:

None

SET AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING:

BUSINESS:

3. 2026 Workplan

UPDATES:

4. Walk for Life
5. City and County Updates - GR Area Human Rights Fund Draft-Community Foundation Clarification
6. Work Groups:
 - Community Engagement/Education and/or Internal Collaboration: Commission Chair Miller and Council Representative MacGregor

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

ADJOURN:

The meeting was adjourned at 5:09pm.
Respectfully submitted by Cynthia Lyman



Grand Rapids Human Rights Commission

Calendar Year 2026 Work Plan

Prepared in accordance with Establishing Ordinance and Commission By-Laws

All activities for 2026 are supported by our guiding vision themes of: Community Awareness; Education outreach and Communication; Our Role; Collaboration; and Listening to Community

2026 QUARTER	GOAL OR ACTIVITY (refer to goal or activity description page for more detail)	ORDINANCE	ACTION TAKEN	EST. COST (See Notes)
Q1 Jan – March <i>Possible events/recognitions:</i> International Women's Day – Black History Month	Ordinance Review Review and clarify HRC role and alignment with city ordinances	2-303 (F)	Updated draft sent to Commissioners for review	\$0
	Fair Housing Act Support development of work group to review possible panel / other community engagement opps within Itasca County	2-303 (B, C, E, F)	Planning meeting set for 1/14 in partnership with Itasca County HRA	\$1,500
	Presentation to Outside Organization Community awareness, education/outreach, listen to community	2-303 (B, C)		\$0
	Quarterly Workplan & Budget Review Review progress on workplan activities and budget expenditures	Article 10 2-303 (G)		\$0
Q2 April – June <i>Possible events/recognitions:</i> Stomp the Stigma – Mental Health Awareness Month – Asian Pacific Islander Heritage Month – LGBTQ+ Pride Month	Story Stitch Event Host community event - either facilitating or bringing someone in. Education/outreach, listen to community	Article 10 (1, 2, 3)	Commissioner McGregor attended training 11/22/2025	\$1,500
	Volunteer at Stomp on Stigma Community awareness and collaboration at established community event	2-303 (B, C) Article 10 (2, 3, 4, 5)		\$5,000
	Volunteer at Pride Event Community awareness and collaboration at established community event	2-303 (B, C) Article 10 (2, 3, 4, 5)		\$7,000
	Presentation to Outside Organization Community awareness, education/outreach, listen to community	2-303 (B, C)		\$0
	Quarterly Workplan & Budget Review Review progress on workplan activities and budget expenditures	Article 10 2-303 (G)		\$0
Q3 July – Sept	Braver Angels Event	Article 10 (1, 2, 3)		\$2,500

2026 QUARTER	GOAL OR ACTIVITY (refer to goal or activity description page for more detail)	ORDINANCE	ACTION TAKEN	EST. COST (See Notes)
<i>Possible events/recognitions:</i> Hispanic Heritage Month Q3	Host community event - either facilitating or bringing someone in. Education/outreach, listen to community			
	Presentation to Outside Organization Community awareness, education/outreach, listen to community	2-303 (B, C)		\$0
	Quarterly Workplan & Budget Review Review progress on workplan activities and budget expenditures	Article 10 2-303 (G)		\$0
Q4 Oct – Dec <i>Possible events/recognitions:</i> Native American Heritage Month	Soup on the Street Community awareness and collaboration at established community event	2-303 (B, C)		\$2,000
	Indigenous People's Day Support Community awareness and collaboration at established community event	2-303 (B, C) Article 10 (2, 3, 4, 5)		\$5,000
	Presentation to Outside Organization Community awareness, education/outreach, listen to community	2-303 (B, C)		\$0
	Quarterly Workplan & Budget Review Review progress on workplan activities and budget expenditures	Article 10 2-303 (G)		\$0

Notes:

City Council eliminated a set budget for the Human Rights Commission in 2026. Estimated costs are ballpark for the entire event – not necessarily a direct contribution expected or anticipated from either the HRC or City of Grand Rapids.

Summary Description of Goals and Activities

The Commission will conduct a comprehensive review of city ordinances related to human rights to clarify the HRC's role and ensure alignment with current city regulations. This review will help commissioners better understand their authority, responsibilities, and the scope of their work in protecting human rights within the community. The ordinance review will provide a framework for future decision-making and help define how the Commission can most effectively serve the community within its legal mandate.

FAIR HOUSING ACT SUPPORT

The Commission will support the development of a work group to explore fair housing issues and possible panel discussions or other community engagement opportunities within Itasca County. This activity aims to increase awareness of fair housing rights, identify housing discrimination concerns, and provide education to community members about their rights and responsibilities under fair housing laws. The work group may partner with local housing authorities, advocacy organizations, and community stakeholders to create meaningful dialogue and resources around housing equity.

PRESENTATIONS TO OUTSIDE ORGANIZATIONS (QUARTERLY)

The Commission will conduct quarterly presentations to outside organizations such as schools, service clubs (Rotary, Lions, etc.), faith communities, and civic groups. These presentations will raise community awareness about the HRC's role, educate audiences about human rights and protected classes, provide outreach to diverse community segments, and create opportunities to listen to community concerns. Each presentation will be tailored to the specific audience and may include information about discrimination prevention, the complaint process, and available resources. This activity supports the vision themes of Community Awareness, Education/Outreach, and Listening to Community.

STORY STITCH EVENT

Story Stitch is a community dialogue facilitation methodology that creates safe spaces for people to share personal stories and build understanding across differences. The Commission will either facilitate a Story Stitch event directly or bring in trained facilitators to lead this community conversation. This event will provide an opportunity for community members to share their lived experiences related to identity, discrimination, belonging, and human rights. Through storytelling and guided dialogue, participants will build empathy, discover common ground, and strengthen community connections. This activity aligns with the vision themes of Education/Outreach, Our Role, and Listening to Community.

BRAVER ANGELS EVENT

Braver Angels is a national organization dedicated to bridging political divides and fostering constructive dialogue across ideological differences. The Commission will either facilitate a Braver Angels workshop or bring in certified Braver Angels facilitators to lead a community event. This structured dialogue will help participants understand different perspectives, reduce contempt and hostility, and find common ground despite political or ideological differences. The event will contribute to building a more cohesive community where diverse viewpoints can coexist respectfully. This activity supports Education/Outreach, Our Role, and Listening to Community vision themes.

QUARTERLY WORKPLAN & BUDGET REVIEW

The Commission will conduct quarterly reviews of its work plan progress and budget expenditures to ensure accountability, transparency, and effective use of resources. These reviews will allow commissioners to assess which activities are meeting their goals, identify any needed adjustments to priorities or approaches, track spending against the annual budget, and ensure alignment with the Commission's vision themes. Regular review creates opportunities for learning, course correction, and strategic planning. This activity reflects the Commission's commitment to responsible stewardship of public resources and effective governance as outlined in Article 10 of the Commission By-Laws.

COMMUNITY EVENT PARTICIPATION & VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

The Commission will actively participate in and volunteer at established community events throughout the year to increase HRC visibility, demonstrate collaboration with community partners, and engage directly with diverse community members. Target events include Stomp on Stigma (mental health awareness), Pride celebrations (LGBTQ+ support), Soup on the Street (food security and homelessness), Indigenous People's Day, and other community gatherings as opportunities arise. Through this hands-on engagement, commissioners will staff information tables, distribute educational materials about human rights protections, assist with event logistics, and engage in conversations with community members about discrimination and available resources. This visible presence helps vulnerable populations feel uplifted and supported while educating the broader community about human rights. The Commission remains open to participating in additional community events that align with its mission and vision themes. This activity supports Community Awareness, Collaboration, and Listening to Community vision themes.

COMMISSIONER TRAINING AND EDUCATION (ONGOING)

Actions or decisions by the Grand Rapids Human Rights Commission to provide freedom from discrimination require knowledge about the types of prohibited discrimination and ways in which these types of discrimination may occur in employment, housing, real property, public accommodations, public services, education, and unfounded charges (City of Grand Rapids Rules, Division 6 Sec 2-301). The Commission plans to identify and support commissioner training opportunities and activities throughout the year. This may include approaches such as outside speakers, presentation or event sponsorship, community meetings, interviews, identifying and sharing of pertinent news articles or reports, and/or other methods. Commissioner training and education will be an ongoing objective and activity that strengthens the Commission's capacity to serve the community effectively.

Notes:

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



Traveling Exhibit Rentals

Who We Are

Green Card Voices is a Minneapolis-based, nationally growing social enterprise that works to record and share first-person narratives of America's immigrants to facilitate a better understanding between immigrants and their communities.

What We Do

Sharing stories is the essence of Green Card Voices. While our stories are available at our digital library and books, the most effective way to engage students and the community is through our traveling exhibits, which can be used in tandem with our curriculum.

Exhibit Description

Green Card Voices offers four different traveling exhibits:

Green Card STEM Voices, Green Card Youth Voices: Twin Cities, My City Was a Sparkling Jewel (Afghan), Ukrainian Voices of Minnesota.

Each exhibit includes portraits, short biographies and quotes from each immigrant.

A QR code is displayed next to each portrait and can be scanned with a mobile device to watch the digital stories.

Exhibit Space/Gallery Requirements

- HVAC requirements: standard
- Security: medium
- Internet: required

Availability

- Exhibit is typically available for a 1 month rental period
- Partial exhibition rental can be arranged

	Afghan/Ukrainian	TC Youth	STEM voices
Contents	20 Retractable Banners (78" high x 34" wide)	20 Retractable Banners (78" high x 34" wide)	20 RetractableBanners (78" high x 34" wide)
Ideal For	Community Centers, Gallery/Exhibit Spaces	Schools, Libraries	Community Centers, Gallery/Exhibit Spaces
Rental Fee	\$1000 per month \$500 conferences/events (7 days or fewer)		

Programming

The following can be provided with an exhibit for **additional charges**:

Educational events: book readings, panel discussion, training or workshop.

Community building events: opening reception with facilitated Story Stitch Circles (see more at www.storystitch.org).

Pickup and Installation

Our exhibits are available for easy pick-up and drop off at U-Haul located at
4215 Hiawatha Ave, Minneapolis, MN 55406.

Detailed information and instructions will be sent after the booking is confirmed.



For booking information, please contact
Krista Pearson, Exhibits Coordinator
at Krista@greencardvoices.com
or call 612.242.4490

STORY STITCH

Telling Stories,
Opening Minds,
Becoming Neighbors

MAKING A BIGGER IMPACT WITH STORY STITCH

As the world continues to experience the movement of people on an unprecedented scale, the need for cultural empathy and understanding between people becomes ever more important. Communities, businesses, and families need tools to create safe and brave spaces to share stories and develop dialogue. Explore our other programs to further make a impact in your community.

Play Virtual Story Stitch

In March 2020, we co-created a virtual version to stay connected and share stories specifically for those feeling isolated during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Virtual Story Stitch* is a storytelling activity that virtually connects people from different cultural backgrounds and geographic locations by using video calling platforms through a device.



Become a certified GCV Story Stitch Facilitator

The *Story Stitch* e-course is offered through an online platform called Teachable. This new, interactive training includes videos of the trainers, demonstrations, practice activities, resources, and opportunities to test your knowledge. Within a 5-hour duration, you can become a certified *Story Stitch* Facilitator on your own time and schedule regardless of geographical location.



Host or Co-Host a Story Stitch Circle

Partner with the Green Card Voices' team of experienced *Story Stitch* facilitators, which have facilitated over 50 in-person *Story Stitch* circles (ranging between 10 to 400 persons at one time). We have worked with various diverse partners and clients including UMN TRIO Upward Bound consisting of 2021 freshmen students, The Department of Public Instruction consisting of Wisconsin teachers and 2019 New Leaders cohort with Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce.



STORY STITCH



Print, Cut and Play Story Stitch

Story Stitch: The Printable Deck provides an affordable, on-demand way to make the *Story Stitch* conversation card game available to people worldwide. The printable format provides users with a quick and easy way to access multilingual versions of the game as well as an easy "do-it-yourself" way to print and create multiple *Story Stitch* card decks.

Learn more about our Story Stitch programs at www.storystitch.org

Ready to connect? Please reach out to Aaliyah Hannah via email at aaliyah@greencardvoices.org

