



CITY OF
GRAND RAPIDS
IT'S IN MINNESOTA'S NATURE

CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION AGENDA

Monday, February 23, 2026

4:30 PM

CALL TO ORDER: Pursuant to due notice and call thereof, a Worksession meeting of the Grand Rapids City Council will be held on Monday, February 23, 2026 at 4:30 PM in the City Hall Council Chambers, 420 North Pokegama Avenue, Grand Rapids, Minnesota.

ROLL CALL:

BUSINESS:

1. Human Rights Commission Update

REVIEW OF REGULAR AGENDA:

ADJOURN:

Attest: Aurimy Groom, Administrative Assistant



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:

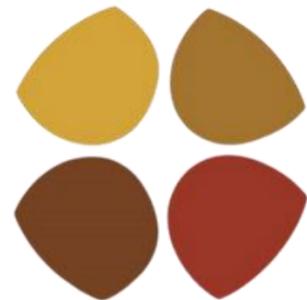
During the year, adjustments may be made to reflect changes in costs, changes in priorities, changes in format or delivery methods, or identification of human rights concerns that were not identified in compiling the preceding list but which the Commission feels need to be addressed. Examples include:

- 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

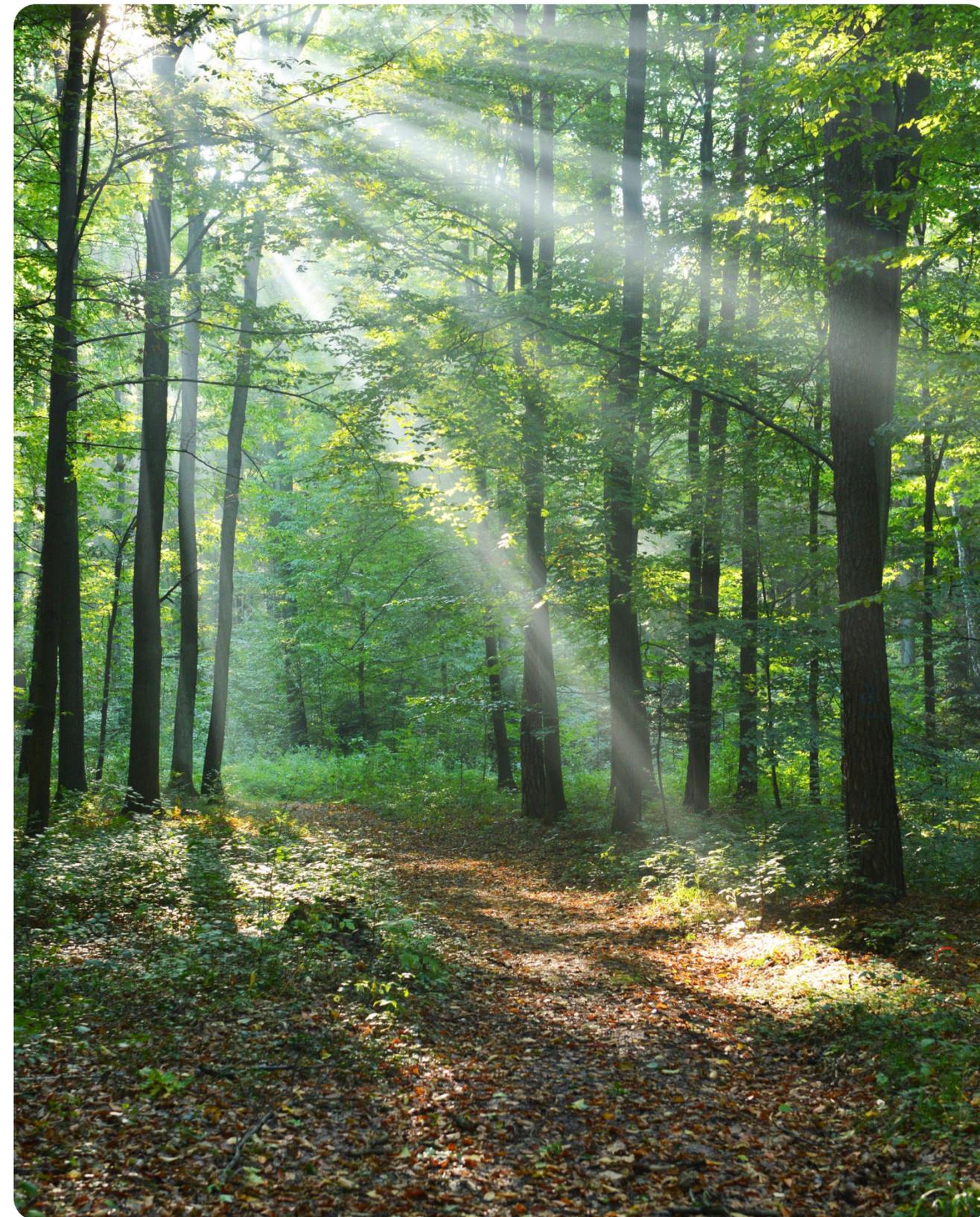
b. Adjustments could occur as a result of use of alternative education/training delivery methods such as print, seminars, webinars, speeches, and others



Grand Rapids
Human Rights Commission
Est. 2004

Human Rights at Home:

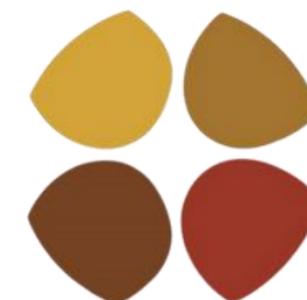
**THE ROLE OF THE CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**





Human Rights Matter Here

- Human rights are everywhere – they show up in housing, schools, jobs, public spaces, and daily interactions.
- Minnesota has one of the strongest Human Rights Acts in the country - EVERY PERSON is covered and protected
- Our city ordinance mirrors that law because rights only matter if they are known, understood, and accessible locally.
- A Human Rights Commission exists to help bring visibility, accessibility, and meaning to law in every day community life.



Our Legal Foundation

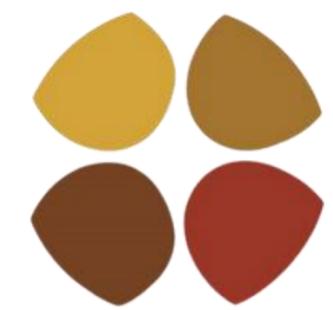
- Established May 24, 2004 under City Code Division 2-V-6.
- One of 5 local City commissions north of the metro
- We are a 9-member Commission
 - All-volunteer
 - Appointed by City Council.
 - Three-year terms, renewable
- Role is education, awareness, listening, and advising
- Not an enforcement or investigative body

Our mission is to promote a community of harmony and respect for the rights and dignity of all



Our Purpose

- Recognize and prevent discrimination and inequalities in the daily life of the community
- Design or support educational programs
- Assist in the implementation of the ordinance
- Provide leadership
- Serve as an advisory body to the City





Who is “protected”?

It is illegal to discriminate on the basis of:

- Race
- Color
- Creed
- Religion
- National Origin
- Sex
- Marital Status
- Sexual Orientation
- Status with regard to public assistance
- Disability
- Age

The Minnesota Human Rights Act (363) prohibits discrimination in:

- Education
- Employment
- Housing
- Public Accommodations
- Public Services
- Credit Services

Actions & Support Highlights

- School and youth engagement through presentations coordinated with the GRHS and Civics Class
- Event support: Juneteenth, Indigenous Peoples Day, Pride
- Presentations and outside speakers
- Disability and accessibility advocacy
- Community conversations



2026 Vision: Guiding Themes

- Community Awareness
- Education & Outreach
- Our Role (clarity & consistency)
- Collaboration
- Listening to Community



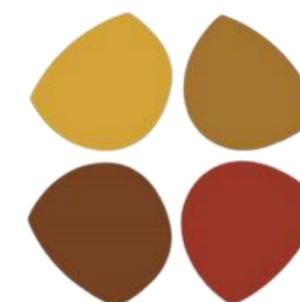
2026 Priority Activities

- Community presentations (schools, service clubs, faith groups, businesses)
- Community dialogue opportunities (Story Stitch or Braver Angels)
- Fair housing education
- Visibility at Pride, Indigenous Peoples Day, Soup on the Street, Stomp on Stigma
- Ongoing ordinance and role clarity work



Funding Reality

- Historically, the City has provided modest but meaningful support (e.g., \$7,500 in recent years).
- 2026 is the first year in recent memory with no allocated funding, due to fiscal constraints and the goal of a 0% levy following federal cuts.
- The work continues – but partnership, collaboration, and community support matter more than ever.



How You Can Be A Part of the Work

- Attend our meetings
- Invite us to present
- Partner on events
- Share concerns or experiences
- Apply to serve as a commissioner
- Help connect people to resources
- Help amplify voices that are often unheard



We're Here to Listen

Join our meeting

Held every last Wednesday of the month
Held at City Hall in the City Council Chambers
420 N. Pokegama Ave | Grand Rapids, MN 55744

Call us

(218) 326-7646

View our Commission Page

Snap the QR code or visit:
<https://cityofgrandrapidsmn.com/bc-hrc>



**City of Grand Rapids
Human Rights Commission
2025 Progress & 2026 Priorities**

2025 Highlights

Community Needs Assessment Overview

- Created a high-level summary combining data from multiple organizations already doing the work.
- Provided a shared snapshot of community strengths, trends, and gaps to inform dialogue and decision-making.

Responsive Resource Development

- Developed and distributed a one-page resource guide when:
 - SNAP benefits were suspended during the federal government shutdown
 - Housing supportive services were discontinued
- Helped connect residents to available supports during disruption.

Education & Public Engagement

- Presentation at the League of Human Rights by Commissioner/Councilor Molly MacGregor.
- Strong engagement at the Pride Pancake Breakfast — an opportunity to:
 - Share information about the HRC
 - Connect with residents
 - Highlight ways community members can engage with the City more broadly.
- Continued participation in community events and ongoing commissioner training.

2026 Strategic Priorities

1. Community Awareness

- Increase understanding of the Human Rights Commission and its purpose.
- Improve visibility of meetings and engagement opportunities.

2. Education & Outreach

- Present to outside organizations (schools, civic groups, community partners).
- Host or facilitate two community dialogue opportunities.
- Continue participating in established community events.

3. Listening to Community

- Strengthen understanding of community concerns.
- Ensure protected classes feel heard and supported.

4. Collaboration

- Build and strengthen partnerships.
- Share relevant updates and emerging issues with City leadership.

5. Responsible Stewardship

- Reviewed and recommended changes to by-laws to better align with actual scope of work, volunteer capacity, and City structure
- Focus efforts where the Commission can have meaningful impact.
- Maintain a realistic scope aligned with volunteer capacity.

Grand Rapids Human Rights Commission

Grand Rapids Mayor and City Councilors

420 North Pokegama Avenue
Grand Rapids, Minnesota

Commission Recommendation: Strengthening Accessibility Advocacy and Planning

Dear Mayor and Councilors,

The Grand Rapids Human Rights Commission thanks the City for its efforts with regard to protecting human rights, including providing appropriate accessibility of buildings and public spaces for people with disabilities, a protected class under the Minnesota Human Rights law. As a Commission, we also believe there is an opportunity for our city to go further in our commitment to accessible public spaces in the city. We recommend that the City consider taking a more active role in shaping the future of accessibility standards by designating or hiring a qualified staff member who would:

- **Be fully informed about and involved in state-level code development**, including technical advisory groups, code hearings, and collaboration with the Minnesota Accessibility Specialist;
- **Perform an accessibility audit of city facilities and spaces** using third-party accessibility audit criteria established by AIA, OSHA and MN-OSHA, and NFPA.

The results of the preceding should be used to inform future city planning and capital improvements to existing and future public buildings and spaces.

Currently, some of the accessibility improvement efforts are researched and advocated by volunteers. Community engagement is vital and should continue. However sustainable, systemic progress requires dedicated capacity on issues tied to acceptable access for people with disabilities. By investing in staff-level leadership, the City would:

- Ensure consistent, informed advocacy aligned with our community values;
- Strengthen coordination between local implementation and evolving formal standards, thereby demonstrating a clear commitment that goes beyond baseline compliance and demonstrates leadership with regard to accessibility for people with disabilities.

As a commission, we welcome the opportunity to collaborate on this effort and ask that the Council consider specifically incorporating responsibility for ensuring disabled-person accessibility into an existing role (e.g., within Planning, Public Works, or Community Development departments) or contracted support.

Accessibility design improves usability, safety, and comfort for everyone in our community. Thank you for considering this recommendation toward a more accessible Grand Rapids.

Sincerely,
Grand Rapids Human Rights Commission