

Owatonna Human Rights Commission Minutes – February 11, 2025

The Owatonna Human Rights Commission (OHRC) met on Tuesday, February 11, 2025, in the Meeting Room of the Charles S. Crandall Center. Chairman Jim Gunderson called the meeting to order at 5:34 p.m. Commissioner Hansen took roll call, present were Commission Members Jim Gunderson, Jessica Bjore, Jennifer Hansen, and Sherry Hill and Administrative Coordinator Clawson. Commissioners Mustafe Ismael, Julia Seykora and Edgar Esquivel were unable to attend

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, Commissioner Gunderson welcomed everyone to the meeting. Commissioner Hill made a motion to approve the agenda as presented, Commissioner Gunderson seconded the motion, all members present voted aye in approval.

After review of the January 14, 2025, OHRC Meeting Minutes, Commissioner Hill made a motion for approval, Commissioner Gunderson seconded the motion, all members present voted aye in approval.

ITEM OF DISCUSSION – Recap 2025 MLK Jr Day Event - Monday, January 20, 2025

Commissioner Hansen presented a spreadsheet detailing registration and attendance, seventy-nine attended the event. Everyone agreed the event went well and thanked Commissioner Seykora for bringing speakers to enhance the audio volume. Commissioner Gunderson will follow-up with Jose for the final Plaza Morena invoice and RCC regarding their donation.

Commissioners will begin planning the 2026 MLK Jr. Day during their next meeting. Hopefully, decisions on the venue and speaker can be completed within the next few months. Commissioner Hansen asked everyone to reach out to community leaders and groups for speaker recommendations and topics and reminded everyone that Human Rights is not just race, other issues should also be addressed.

ITEM OF DISCUSSION – 2025 OHRC Activities

- 1) February 11th – OCLA Cultural & Diversity at the Library after lunch. Today, Commissioners Gunderson, Hansen and Seykora presented information about the OHRC. The suggested PowerPoint presentation be prepared to share information about the OHRC at future meetings. The presentation slides will list OHRC members, the OHRC Mission Statement, and recap recent events and planned activities.
- 2) March 18th – HomeTown Credit Union Annual Meeting. Their Board Director, Ethan Cords has chosen OHRC as recipient of a \$500 donation, each of their directors could select a local non-profit organization to support with a financial donation. OHRC Commission Chairman Gunderson and Vice-Chairman Bjore plan to attend to accept their donation, Secretary Hanson will attend if either is unable to attend.
- 3) April 30th - Owatonna Community Connect at Four Seasons – Commissioner Gunderson has reserved a table for OHRC at this event. He will display the OHRC banner, table cover, and OHRC Brochures. This event offers opportunities to network with other community organizations and he reminded commissioners to bring their OHRC business cards to share.

- 4) Downtown Thursdays – first Thursday of each month during June to September. OHRC will host a human library with plans to offer six new books each month. Commissioner Bjore presented two proposals of the OHRC tent, a navy-blue tent with white logo display or white tent with a full colored logo display. The group consensus was the white tent with a full colored logo.

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Commissioner Bjore will follow up on the OHRC banner when the tent is received; the banner will be fitted to the back of the tent and include information in three languages.

City Administrator Busse joined the meeting at 6:00 p.m.

- 5) 2025 Welcoming Week, September 12-21 – OHRC will use the September Downtown Thursday event to kick off the 2025 Welcome Week activities. Commissioners Ismael and Esquivel are planning a community soccer game like last year and invite additional teams to participate.
- 6) Steele County 2025 Health Fair – September 10th at the Four Seasons Centre. Commissioners agreed this event will also offer opportunities to promote the OHRC. Commissioner Hansen and Bjore are participating with other groups; OHRC participation will be discussed at the March OHRC Meeting.

Commissioner's Comments:

Commissioner Gunderson commented that his term of OHRC appointment will expire on April 30th. He is not eligible for reappointment as this is his second term served. He asked everyone to encourage others to apply when the Member Application is posted on the city's website next month.

Commissioner Bjore requested a review of the services OHRC members can offer if/when contacted about an issue within the community. Commissioner Gunderson commented that many previous requests were the result of miscommunication. He advised the first step should be to confirm the information with both parties and often the situation is resolved; if not, contact City Administrator Busse.

City Administrator Busse commented that often the parties involved prefer to talk with OHRC Commissioners and not city staff. She has met with OHRC members to discuss options for resolution or recommended they contact the state's Human Rights office. OHRC has no legal authority, our Chief of Police has served as a mediator in some previous complaints but if needed, the situation would be referred to the state's Human Rights Commission.

Commissioner Hansen commented that the OHRC should not be focused on only racial issues, there are current and previous LBGQT issues. Commissioner Bjore commented that

changes are needed prior to the 2025 Pride in Park event; City Administrator Busse commented the city is in process of amending the city's noise ordinance. Commissioner Hill asked if OHRC could become involved in an immigration matter, City Administrator Busse commented that most would be a federal matter and probably not the city.

ADJOURNMENT

At 6:40 p.m., Commissioner Bjore made a motion to adjourn, Commissioner Hill seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned. The next OHRC Meeting is planned for Tuesday, March 11th at 5:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeanette Clawson, Administrative Coordinator