

Owatonna Human Rights Commission Minutes – August 12, 2025

The Owatonna Human Rights Commission (OHRC) met on Tuesday, August 12, 2025, in the Meeting Room of the Charles S. Crandall Center. Chairman Bjore called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m. Commissioner Mustafe took roll call. Present were Commissioners Bjore, Ismael, Hill, Hult, Esquivel and Hansen; City Administrator Tuma; and Administrative Coordinator Clawson. Commissioner Seykora was unable to attend.

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, Chairman Bjore welcomed everyone to the meeting. Commissioner Hansen made a motion to approve the Meeting Agenda as presented, Commissioner Hill seconded the motion, all members present voted aye in approval. Commissioner Hansen requested minor change in the July OHRAC Minutes and made a motion to approve with this change, Commissioner Bjore seconded the motion, all members present voted aye in approval.

ITEMS OF DISCUSSION

Pride in the Park Event – July 12, 2025

Commissioner Hansen commented that she was disappointed with the protest during the event. OPD advised the protestors that they could not use their bullhorn within the park area per new ordinance passed earlier this year. So, the protester with the bullhorn moved across the street in front of the Court House and other protestors moved to the center of the park carrying large signs, 4' x 6' yelling and screaming with claims of their First Amendment Right for Freedom of Speech. The police were called several times, but protestors did leave at 7:00 pm and the event was over at 7:30 pm. I met with City Administrator Busse, Asst City Admin Tuma, Police Chief Mundale, Police Captain Duchene, Rainbowatonna Member Black and OHRC Chairperson Bjore to discuss what happened during the event. I was very disappointed with the involvement by the police. There have been several Letters to the Editor in the Owatonna Peoples Press and 15-20 people attend the City Council Meeting last week to make statements during the Public Comments.

City Administrator Tuma commented it is difficult to separate the First Amendment Freedom of Speech and the Right to Gather. There will be another follow-event meeting on September 11th and there are some options to consider preventing similar protesting activities during future planned events.

Hansen commented that the Rainbowatonna Board Members work for a full year preparing for the annual Pride in the Park event. It is frustrating that we couldn't enjoy the event as we were busy with crown control. The protestors were there to entice actions and fortunately, the vendors were understanding about what was happening. Pride in the Park has grown each year:

2023 – event in Moorehouse Park, estimate 500+ attended

2024 – event held in Dartt's Park, 32 tents, 4 food vendors, estimate 600 attended

2025 – event held in Central Park, 46 tents, 6 food vendors, estimate 700+ attended

2026 – planning for event at Central Park again.

Commissioner Hill suggested contacting Parasol Patrol. This group has found a unique way to stifle aggressive actions by protestors; they open umbrellas in front to shield children and others. The Parasol Patrol was formed out of a need to protect our children's eyes and ears from the hateful speech of protesters. Information is available on their website, parasolpatrol.org.

OHRC Promotions:

1. The Steele County Times will publish articles about the Welcome Week activities during the last week of August.
2. Commissioner Bjore will do a City Spot with Communications Manager Sheely.
3. Straight Talk – Commissioners Ismael and Hansen recorded a segment with Karen Hale which will play during the last week of August.

Items of Discussion

- 1) Downtown Thursday (DTT) Event – September 4, 2025
Commissioner Hansen commented she has been preparing the Human Library Event – Nine human books are confirmed, and she has filmed several of these interviews. Waiting to hear from other subject books and asked everyone to contact potential books. would like to have 18 books available. Also asked everyone to push for publicity of the event. There will be three 1-hour segments during DTT offering 6 different books each hour. Will get cookies, bottled water, candy, need 100+ OHRC brochures, and \$5 Chamber Bucks for courtesy thanks for each book.
- 2) Meeting on the Fields – September 6, 2025
Commissioner Bjore commented that the Rec on the Go trailer will arrive at 5:30 pm, OHRC members should also arrive at 5:30 pm to help set up. The soccer game will begin at 6:30 pm. She suggested a sign be hang on the fence by the field the week prior with statement, "Game this Saturday" and recommended Legacy Sign. The sign would be similar to a previous OHRC sign but there would not be specific event detail. She has spoken with Corey at Legacy Sign and estimates a 8' long sign would cost \$200.
Commissioner Hansen made a motion to approve purchase of sign from Legacy Sign promoting Game this Saturday. Commissioner Hill seconded the motion and all members present voted aye in approval.
Commissioner Seykora will order player shirts from Brad Fisher, red and blue with white lettering, estimate \$9.00/each. Print on the back will include OHRC and will ask if display could be in three languages: English, Spanish and Samali.
There will be bottled water and fruit available during the game.
Commissioner Ismael will line up two referees for the soccer game.
- 3) 2026 MLK Jr. Day Event – January 19, 2026
Earlier today, Commissioner Seykora sent an e-mail to all OHRC Commissioners to consider Jasmine Brett Stringer, author of Seize Your Life as the speaker during the 2026

MLK Jr. Event. Several other suggestions were mentioned and all agreed everyone should bring speaker suggestions to the September OHRC Meeting. Plan to make the speaker selection should be made during the September Meeting so plans can begin.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Administrative Coordinator Clawson shared copy of article received via e-mail from the Steele County Times, a teen's experience at a local restaurant brings discrimination charge. Today, an Owatonna restaurant (Buffalo Wild Wings) is at the subject of discrimination charges filed with the Minnesota Department of Human Rights. Gender Justice filed the charge on behalf of 18-year-old Gerika Mudra. Several commissioners commented they were aware of the filing. OHRC commissioners and discussed if contacted about this state case, they should refer them to the state office.

ADJOURNMENT

At 6:31 p.m., Commissioner Hansen made a motion to adjourn, Commissioner Hill seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned. The next OHRC Meeting is planned for Tuesday, September 9th at 5:30 pm. This meeting will be held in the Second Floor Conference Room at City Hall.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeanette Clawson, Administrative Coordinator