

Owatonna Human Rights Commission  
Minutes – November 12, 2025

The Owatonna Human Rights Commission (OHRC) met on Wednesday, November 12, 2025, in the Meeting Room of the Charles S. Crandall Center at City Hall. Chairman Bjore called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. Present were Commissioners Bjore, Seykora, Hansen, Esquivel, and Hill; City Administrator Tuma; and Administrative Coordinator Clawson. OHRC Commissioners Hult and Ismael were unable to attend.

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, Chairman Bjore welcomed everyone to the meeting. Commissioner Seykora made a motion to approve the Meeting Agenda as presented, Commissioner Bjore seconded the motion, all members present voted aye in approval. After reviewing the OHRC Meeting Minutes from the last meeting, September 9th, Commissioner Bjore made a motion for approval, Commissioner Hansen seconded the motion, and all members present voted aye in approval. It was noted that the October meeting was canceled due to a lack of quorum.

COMMISSION MEMBER UPDATE/COMMENTS

Commissioner Hult's daughter Harper was born prematurely on October 11<sup>th</sup> in Rochester. She will be in the NIC Unit for several months and Commissioner Hult and his wife, Annie are staying at the Ronald McDonald House to allow them to be at or near the hospital.

Commissioner Esquivel commented he and Commissioner Ismael recently met with David Campana, the Legislative and Policy Director of the Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs. They had a good discussion on what is happening within Owatonna and discussed OHRC hosting a future event. They plan to meet with Mayor Jessop to begin plans for an event to focus on the diversity of the city's residents.

Commissioner Hansen commented that on September 10<sup>th</sup>, she attended a follow-up meeting about the 2025 Pride in the Park with city staff and several members of Rainbowatonna. She was representing OHRC as they reviewed the 2025 event, how the noise ordinance was designated, and how there could be opportunity to have a designated protest area. Last month, the Pride Event in Austin MN included a Designated Protest Area and their event went smoothly. There were a few changes to the Safety Plan which Rainbowatonna was not aware of plan to discuss further during a meeting in January with discussion of the 2026 Event Permit Application received. Hopefully, the city's amended noise and interference ordinance will allow next year's event to not be overtaken by protestors. Rainbowatonna is not planning to run and hide, other groups do not and Rainbowatonna will not either. Their Event Permit for the 2026 Pride in the Park is to again use Central Park. She commented she believes the city has an issue with accepting the LBGQ community and person organizing the protest is from Owatonna, this community must do better. She is not a current board member of the Rainbowatonna Board and plans to attend the January follow-up meeting as a representative of the OHRC. Commissioners Bjore and Seykora commented they will also plan to attend this January meeting. Hoping additional discussions with the city will allow the Pride in the Park event to

become a welcoming event for everyone. Commissioner Bjore commented she liked the parasol group which Commissioner Hill previously mentioned and will be researching information about this organization.

Commissioner Hill commented she will be unable to attend the December OHRC Meeting. She has a surgery planned and anticipates several months to fully recover. Her plans may include attending group support meetings which meet the same dates and time as the OHRC meetings.

Commissioner Esquivel commented that last week he was waiting in line at a local bank when a manager completely ignored him and offered to assist the person behind him. He felt disrespected and upset that someone in a supervisory position acted this way. He said thank you and the manager apologized for looking past him, but he felt the apology was insincere and the person behind him also noticed this and asked him if he was OK. He has been a customer at this bank for more than 25 years and is now considering closing his account. Commissioner Bjore commented that she will stop at the bank to follow up on this incident.

Commissioner Seykora commented that she and Commissioner Bjore represented OHRC when participating in the Owatonna Chamber of Commerce "Made in Owatonna Event" on Monday, October 29<sup>th</sup>. They gave a presentation at the OHRC mural on Vine Street about the mural. A group of 50 attended and participated in an engaging conversation and a question/answer session after their presentation.

Commissioner Hansen commented Communications Director Sheely sent her a message that OHRC can apply to become a certified Welcoming Committee with Welcome America. Commissioner Bjore commented that their services were available the past two years, the initial two-year period, at no cost and now an annual membership fee would be incurred for 2026. She questioned what benefits OHRC has received during the last two years. Commissioner Hansen commented that the city needs to be more welcoming on local matters before we apply to be acknowledged as welcoming community by a nationwide organization.

#### ITEMS OF DISCUSSION

2026 MLK Jr, Day Event – Commissioner Seykora commented her previous recommendation for a featured speaker has commented to another event. She suggested a panel of three residents be featured as a panel to respond to directed questions. Members would have varying life opportunities and offer a range of answers. More information will be shared during the December OHRC Meeting. Commissioner Hansen will confirm plans at the Steele County History Center and Commissioner Bjore will contact Jose at the Plaza Morena about plans for the noon meal.

Additional OHRC Program – Commissioner Bjore commented she recently attended a conference on Human Trafficking and Organ Harvesting. She would like to share this program with OHS Students and will contact Superintendent Champa and Principal Kath. The speaker fee is \$4,000 but she believes the information is invaluable and will provide additional information at the next OHRC Meeting.

2025 Expenditures – Commissioners reviewed the 2025 Budget and discussed options of additional expenditures. Commissioner Seykora commented that Community Pathways has a current need as the Federal Government shutdown canceled or delayed monthly SNAP benefits for many families. City Administrator Tuma commented OHRC funds must be spent to meet the purpose of the commission; a request was sent to City Attorney Walbran for clarification if a donation can be given to another organization. Commissioner Seykora made a motion to allocate \$2,000 to Community Pathways if allowable, if not, the OHRC will pursue the option to consider offering human trafficking education. Commissioner Hill seconded this motion; all members present voted aye in approval.

Commissioner Seykora commented the Alliance for Greater Equity has an event planned and suggested that the OHRC participant and/or support their event. Commissioner Hansen commented that she would oppose this, it would be hard to support one group and not others. Other suggestions were to purchase long sleeved shirts for OHRC members, t-shirts for the 2026 Meeting on the Field game, or a promotional video of the city. Commissioners were asked to bring suggestions to the December meeting.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

Sam Bendorf, thanked the OHRC Commissioners for their involvement in this commission. This is the second OHRC Meeting he has attended and likes to hear the discussions during their meetings. He struggles with spending organization's funds just to clear an available budget balance and requested to speak with a member in private. Chairman Bjore offered to meet with him immediately following this meeting.

#### ADJOURNMENT

At 6:45 p.m., Commissioner Bjore made a motion to adjourn, Commissioner Sykora seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned. The next OHRC Meeting is planned for Tuesday, December 9<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jeanette Clawson, Administrative Coordinator