

City of Tulsa Human Rights Commission Report - December 2020

Laura Bellis, Commission Chair

The long-planned restructure of the Human Rights Commission launched at the beginning of 2020. Much of this baseline restructure year was spent building a strong foundation for the future.

The commission had a variety of structural inquiries to grapple with and resolve throughout the year as we worked to ensure our new format is matched with activities conducive to yielding an impact. Given the new structure by design shifting some of the purpose of the commission, it has been critical to navigate maintaining prior core functions balanced with incorporating new ones. This was accomplished by:

- Holding a retreat, the first one in several years, at the VFW in February with an external facilitator in which we:
 - Reviewed opportunities implicit in the new structure
 - Strategized how to be fair to those simultaneously serving on two commissions while ensuring work is accomplished on this one
 - Assessed if the commission is primarily a recommendation body or a body that recommends and commits to action to see that recommendation through
- Restructuring meetings to include updates/dialogue across other Title V Commissions and the Mayor's Youth Council
- Initiating mapping of active work and committees across Title V Commissions to assess opportunities for collaboration and gaps
- Holding a special meeting in July to review committee active work, historical work, and determine recommendations for standing committees based on need
- Utilizing the Advisory Committee to review and form recommendations for Bylaw changes, leveraging Bylaws from other commissions and focusing on adjusting standing committees, resulting in merging the Advisory and Compliance Committees
- Piloting a few iterations of processes to form a recommendation, achieve consensus and issue said recommendation to the Mayor's Office and City Council resulting in a letter in July recommending and supporting the Mayor's Office and City Council in implementing policies through a public health lens

Two other key items have advanced this year that further our foundation for education and advocacy action in the future:

- After several years of advocacy and follow-up the Human Rights Complaint forms are now accessible to be filled out online via 311, making them more broadly accessible across the community than in their prior format yielding:
 - A resource the commission can actively promote
 - A source of data the commission can analyze for trends and assess areas of need
- The basis for a partnership with the Terry West Civil Legal Clinic at the University of Tulsa which is seeking to promote community knowledge related to Human Rights/ knowing your rights