



Human Rights Commission

Regular Meeting | August 16, 2025 | 3:30 – 4:30 pm

City Hall at One Technology Center | 10 North Meeting Room

Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present: Casey Bakhsh, Anna Barros, Dezeray Edwards, Drew France, Larissa McNeil, Anthony Meadows, Katie Eller Murray, Amanda Peregrina, Parisa Pilehvar, Joyce Roberts, Tamecca Rogers, Andrea Walker

Commissioners Absent: Joshua Starks, Dave Walker

I. **Call to Order and Introductions**

- a. Chairwoman Walker called the meeting to order at 3:32 pm.

II. **Approve Meeting Minutes**

- a. Chairwoman Walker entertained a motion to approve the June meeting minutes.
 - i. Commissioner Eller Murray made a motion, Commissioner Meadows seconded.
 - 1. Aye: 9, Nay: 0, Abstain: 1 (Commissioner Roberts)
 - a. Commissioners Pilehvar and Edwards were not yet present in the meeting.
 - ii. Motion carried, June meeting minutes approved.

III. **Chair / Vice Chair Report**

- a. Chairwoman Walker talked about Safe Move Tulsa, a City Council initiative to address homelessness. If City Council votes to fund the initiative, it will house 150 people currently living on the streets and another 150 currently in shelters. The program will pay rent for a year and provide assistance with employment, addiction services, financial literacy, and more. with the goal that in 12 months individuals can self-sustain. It is a \$6 million package.
- b. Chairwoman Walker also elevated mental health statistics from Health Minds Policy Initiative.
 - i. Statistics:
 - 1. 1 in 4 mental illness in Oklahoma (53% don't receive treatment).
 - 2. 1 in 5 substance use disorder (74% don't receive treatment).
 - 3. Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in Oklahoma.
 - ii. City Council went on a tour to look at mental health crisis response in Tulsa. The key needs are having someone to call, someone to respond, and somewhere to go.
 - 1. COPES is embedded in the 911 call center 24/7, diverting 560 calls since March.
 - 2. COPES mobile crisis response teams responded to 4,500+ calls in 2024.
 - 3. The sobering center integrated with GRAND Mental Health in 2024 and Tulsa will open a psychiatric care center in 2026.



- iii. Enhanced focus on children and families: The Mayor's Office of Children, Youth, and Families (MOCYF) and the Children's Cabinet have a goal of putting 15,000 additional youth on the path to economic mobility.
 - 1. Chairwoman Walker represents HRC on the Children's Cabinet.
 - 2. Commissioner Barros offered to answer any questions about MOCYF since she works at Impact Tulsa.

IV. Committee, Liaison, and Title V Commissions Calls for Action

- a. Discussion and Vote: Letter to City Council supporting Human Rights Ordinance that Unifies the Nondiscrimination Protections in Public Accommodations and Housing
 - i. The letter presented to commissioners (sent via email in advance of the meeting and printed copies) was drafted by Vice Chair France.
 - ii. Chairwoman Walker entertained a motion to approve the letter and distribute to City Council.
 - 1. Commissioner Bakhsh made a motion, Commissioner Peregrina seconded.
 - 2. Commission Discussion:
 - a. Vice Chair France shared the letter is an opportunity to inform City Council's decision. Noted the council's timeline of revisiting the ordinance discussion later in August and voting on September 10. Vice Chair France and Chairwoman Walker worked with a 2SLGBTQIA+ Committee working group.
 - i. HRC also sent a letter in 2023 when this issue previously came up.
 - ii. Working to unify anti-discrimination language across city code, creating equity for all Tulsans to live without fear of discrimination.
 - b. Commissioner Eller Murray thanked Vice Chair France for taking this on. Important for HRC to write something. Are there statistics that can be included to demonstrate the need for consistency in language?
 - i. Vice Chair France noted the urgency of this matter, so if statistics were to be added it would need to be done quickly.
 - c. Commissioner Rogers: The letter is great, and protection only as strong as peoples' accessibility to file a complaint.
 - i. Vice Chair France agrees it's not a silver bullet, but an important milestone.
 - d. Commissioner Barros: How would a letter like this be presented in the past? Lexi explained it's delivered directly to City Council.
 - e. Commissioner Barros: Are points in the letter based on hesitations from councilors who are on the fence?
 - i. Vice Chair France: Primary talking points previously was about having more time to gather information and deliberate. There has been concern about drawing attention to Tulsa based on the federal environment.



- f. Commissioner Pilehvar offered that the ordinance change is not revolutionary, other cities are doing it, simply updating for consistency. Appreciates the “right thing to do” language.
- g. Commissioner Barros suggested adding a more concrete example of what it means to have this ordinance in practice. Vice Chair France noted that this is in concert with other strategies that will humanize the issue with personal stories. Not sure if this letter is the best place to include those stories.
- h. Commissioner Eller Murray: Does it make sense to offer support and guidance to City Council so they don’t feel this is only on them?
- i. Chairwoman Walker noted that no commissioners are voicing that HRC should not send a letter, so the conversation shifts to possible amendments.
- j. Commissioner Eller Murray proposed including statistics that show the impact on the community.
 - i. Commissioner Bakhsh proposed brainstorming what stats might be compelling.
 - ii. Commissioner Barros: Size of the community.
 - iii. Commissioner Bakhsh: Demonstrate the need for under-protected classes to be added to the ordinance.
 - iv. Commissioner Pilehvar: There is risk in making letter too long, also risk in having inaccurate data. Could simply name that at this time, if someone faces discrimination based on these identities, they have no recourse at the city level.
- k. Vice Chair France reiterated the power in HRC having a unified voice and representing a variety of different groups.
 - i. Commissioner Bakhsh appreciates the opening paragraph listing HRC representation for this reason.
- l. Commissioner Pilehvar offered an addition of one sentence describing HRC’s focus on the human rights complaints process.
- m. Commissioner Barros reminded the group that the letter may feel symbolic, but there are concrete actions that can or can’t be taken as a result of the policy.
- n. Commissioner Bakhsh reminded commissioners that they can speak to councilors.
- o. Commissioner Eller Murray emphasized the importance of councilors seeing HRC as a resource.
- p. Commissioners identified three amendments:
 - i. Offer HRC as a resource to City Council in the first paragraph.
 - ii. Position HRC as the body that oversees human rights in Tulsa in the last paragraph.



- iii. Specify that these updates will enable Tulsans to file complaints of discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and veteran status in the last paragraph.
- iii. Chairwoman Walker entertained a motion to approve the letter with three amendments and distribute to City Council.
 - 1. Commissioner Pilehvar made a motion, Commissioner Barros seconded.
 - a. Aye: 12, Nay: 0, Abstain: 0
 - 2. Motion carries, the letter is approved with three amendments and will be distributed to City Council.
- iv. Commissioner Barros asked about the working group's media strategy so community knows HRC has taken this action.
 - 1. Chairwoman Walker shared that's a possibility, the working group wanted to start soft with public strategies.

V. Humanitarian of the Year Award 2025

- a. Update from Vice Chair France
 - i. Received four nominees from other Title V Commissions.
- b. Commissioners Volunteer for Community Relations Committee, Tasked with HOTY Award Selection
 - i. The Community Relations Committee, chaired by Vice Chair France, will review nominations and select honoree(s) and prepare for event in December.
 - ii. Commissioners Rogers and Eller Murray volunteered.
 - iii. Vice Chair France will send two committee members the nominations and set up a time to meet.
 - iv. Commissioner Rogers asked if HRC can honor youth.
 - 1. Vice Chair France said the award is open regardless of age.
 - 2. Commissioner Rogers clarified she's interested in discussing adding a youth-specific award.

VI. Discussion and Possible Action: HRC Setting Up Tulsa Community Foundation Account

- a. Vice Chair France shared that one of the topics that came out of the Title V Commission Retreat is the idea of commissions setting up a Tulsa Community Foundation (TCF) account. This has been an effective vehicle to hold donations to pay for programming for the Indian Affairs (GTAIAC) and Asian Affairs Commissions (AAC).
 - i. A fund would allow HRC to see what's possible with more resources.
 - ii. HRC can't build additional resources if there is no repository.
- b. Commissioner Rogers asked if we can receive grants with an account, Vice Chair France confirmed that is the case.
- c. Commissioner Roberts shared that GTAIAC uses the funds in their account to pay for Native American Day and Dream Keepers Awards.
- d. Vice Chair France noted we'll need seed money to get it started.
- e. Commissioner Eller Murray: Don't want to take away from other commissions.
 - i. Vice Chair France shared he doesn't think HRC would take away from established donors to GTAIAC and AAC.
 - ii. Commissioner Meadows: We won't be double-dipping.
 - iii. Commissioner Eller Murray: We'll need to coordinate with other commissions.



- f. Chairwoman Walker noted Compassionate Tulsa has a TCF account as a funds holder when folks want to donate.
- g. Chairwoman Walker and Vice Chair France both noted we need more information to bring back to HRC.
- h. Commissioner Pilehvar asked who is taking the lead, and Vice Chair noted he's already had an informal conversation with TCF and is willing to continue.
 - i. Commissioner Pilehvar noted capacity and focus can be a challenge for HRC, especially if we don't have funding needs currently.
 - ii. Vice Chair France: Hope it can be pretty turn-key. Agree this isn't the the top thing.
- i. Commissioner Peregrina: HRC has talked about entering parades/festivals but can't pay the entrance fees. Would be nice to have that available.
- j. Chairwoman Walker entertained a motion to start the process to look into potentially opening a TCF account for HRC.
 - i. Vice Chair France made a motion, Commissioner Edwards seconded.
 - 1. Aye: 12, Nay: 0, Abstain: 0
 - ii. Motion carried, Vice Chair France will look into potentially opening at TCF account for HRC.

VII. Old Business

- a. Updates from Committee Chairs Aligned with 2025 HRC Goals
 - i. Chairwoman Walker reminded commissioners of two goal-focused working groups.
 - ii. Commissioner Pilehvar has asked about obtaining demographic data for ABCs. Will set a meeting with the working group with enough time to receive the data. Lexi affirmed she is working on getting the data.
 - iii. Vice Chair France: Lexi researched and created a list of cities that have more modern options available. Will have a small group (including La Kendra) meet with City Legal and City Clerk, want to know what is available to us to make changes.
- b. Chairwoman Walker provided an update from Compassionate Tulsa: Coffee chats with HRC members have been delayed but will still happen. Beginning to consider a city-wide event to celebrate our "many-ness" and "one-ness" within the next 12 – 18 months. Distributed the nomination form for Compassionate Tulsa Awards.
 - i. Commissioner Peregrina offered to translate the nomination form into Spanish to make it more accessible to the community.
 - ii. Commissioner Rogers asked who can nominate, Chairwoman Walker clarified that any Tulsan can submit a nomination.

VIII. New Business

- a. Discussion: Possible HRC Response to Denver Ave. Boulder Installation
 - i. Commissioner Barros submitted the HRC Support Form on this topic and copies were provided to commissioners prior to the meeting.
 - ii. Commissioner Barros wanted to gauge interest on this topic. A few weeks ago, large boulders were installed near the bus station at Denver Avenue downtown. There has been a large response from community identifying these boulders are precluding people from existing in the shade, has been considered hostile



architecture (built environment preventing sitting or laying down to prevent folks from congregating, which mostly affects unhoused individuals). There are very few places left downtown where people can exist in the shade for free.

1. Gauging interest in meeting outside of commission meetings to consider drafting a letter to City Council and Mayor Nichols.
 2. How can HRC provide guidance or be a voice for those who are harmed by this decision?
- iii. Commission Discussion:
1. Commissioner Rogers: Why were the boulders placed there, were there alternative solutions? There were probably discussions we weren't aware of behind the scenes.
 - a. Commissioner Barros: Can ask to meet with Mayor Nichols to ask those questions. From another public meeting, sounds like there are reports of folks being or feeling unsafe at the bus station, identified that people congregating was a cause. The City partners with BeHeard Movement to provide shuttles five days a week to their location for laundry, case management, but this is not an available resource during evenings or weekends.
 2. Commissioner Pilehvar: This is something that affects people of many identities. Does this actually violate the human rights ordinance? Because it affects people of all identities, HRC can still be the right group to call a meeting since we represent a cross section of community groups. Can we take this up under the guise of violating the human rights ordinance? Or should we have more general public engagement?
 - a. Commissioner Barros agrees there needs to be more digging into this.
 3. Commissioner Bakhsh: Has the Mayor's Office released a statement to address the process that led to this decision? Would like to be reassured that there are people who Mayor Nichols is going to receive advice related to this issue, community partners. We may not have enough information. Want to be part of the change and progress.
 4. Commissioner Eller Murray: The Last response in the news from Mayor Nichols was a public meeting, during which he shared the boulders will be an art instillation.
 5. Dion'trae Hayes: These are valid questions, happy to go to Mayor's Office to get an update on this issue. Mayor Nichols always makes decisions in community and has a heart to get people into housing. There are undeniable issues at this bus station. Don't want any part of our community to feel left out. She will provide HRC with an update.
 - a. Vice Chair France asked if someone from the Mayor's Office could come speak to HRC. Dion'trae will see if this is a possibility.
 6. Commissioner Rogers: Do we have crime data for that specific area?
 - a. Dion'trae shared the data can be requested from the Tulsa Police Department.



- b. Commissioner Barros asked how we make that request, Dion'trae clarified that HRC can consider the request made.
- 7. Commissioner Rogers shared a personal story of feeling unsafe in this area.
- 8. Commissioner Barros questioned whether there is data to back up that installing boulders will enhance safety. Would like to see the documentation supporting that.
- 9. Vice Chair France encouraged commissioners to look at the Tulsa World's coverage of the public meeting. Would like the Mayor's Office to explain holistically what their strategies are.

IX. Announcements / Public Comments

- a. Humanitarian of the Year Award Ceremony: December 11 at 6pm in City Council Chambers with Mayor Nichols as the keynote speaker.

X. Adjournment

- a. Chairwoman Walker entertained a motion to adjourn.
 - i. Commissioner Barros made a motion, Commissioner Meadows seconded.
 - 1. Aye: 12
 - ii. Motion carried, motion adjourned at 4:41 pm.