



Human Rights Commission

Regular Meeting | September 15, 2025 | 3:30 – 4:30 pm

City Hall at One Technology Center | 10 North Meeting Room

Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present: Ana Barros, Whitney Cipolla, Drew France, Larissa McNeil, Parisa Pilehvar, Joyce Roberts, Tamecca Rogers, Andrea Walker, Dave Walker

Commissioners Absent: Casey Bakhsh, Dezeray Edwards, Anthony Meadows, Katie Eller Murray, Amanda Peregrina, Joshua Starks

I. **Call to Order and Introductions**

- a. Chairwoman Walker called the meeting to order at 3:34 pm.
- b. Chairwoman Walker welcomed the newest commissioner, Whitney Cipolla.

II. **Approve Meeting Minutes**

- a. Chairwoman Walker entertained a motion to approve the August meeting minutes.
 - i. Commissioner Roberts made a motion, Commissioner Barros seconded.
 - 1. Aye: 8, Nay: 0, Abstain: 1 (Commissioner Cipolla)
 - ii. Motion carried, August meeting minutes approved.

III. **Guest Speaker: Dion'trae Hayes, Chief Resilience Officer at City of Tulsa**

- a. This is the Department of Resilience and Equity's (DRE) first year as a standalone department. Being integrated into the City's core function signifies the importance of our work.
- b. DRE's work is built on four pillars of resilience and six functional areas
 - i. Pillars of resilience:
 - 1. Create an inclusive future that honors all Tulsans
 - 2. Equip all Tulsans to overcome barriers and thrive
 - 3. Advance economic opportunity for all
 - 4. Transform city and regional systems to improve outcomes for all Tulsans
 - ii. Functional areas: Data and policy, financial empowerment, civic and community engagement, immigrant and refugee inclusion, mental health and well-being, justice and human rights
- c. Two documents that guide DRE's work: Resilient Tulsa (published 2018), New Tulsans Initiative (immigrant & refugee inclusion).
- d. What is a resilient city? Capacity of individuals, communities, institutions, businesses, and systems within a city to survive, adapt, and grow no matter what kinds of chronic stresses and acute shocks they experience.
- e. Have to confront the past to work towards the future.
- f. City's Language Access Policy: Translate vital documents across departments. Implementation is a work in progress and the City is making strides to be inclusive of major languages spoken by Tulsans.



- g. Equity Dialogues: Trained Tulsans facilitate racial equity conversations. Dialogues are hosted primarily in libraries. We may not always understand or agree, but there is magic of shared understanding when discussing in small groups.
- h. Some mental health work has been transferred under Dr. Jabraan Pasha and the Office of Mental Health and Well-being.
- i. Dion'trae acknowledged HRC's role in the justice & human rights functional area of DRE. HRC's initiative and input is vital.
- j. Welcoming Week: Nation-wide week of celebration of immigrant and refugee inclusion.
- k. Community violence initiative: Terence Crutcher Foundation, Impact Tulsa, and Youth Services of Tulsa are partnering with the city to help pinpoint violence hotspots.
- l. The upcoming Equality Indicators Summit will be an opportunity to be part of discussion of the indicators that are tracked.
- m. Commission Discussion
 - i. Commissioner Barros asked about the Language Access Policy: Who can use it, is it just for written materials or also for spoken interpretation?
 - 1. Dion'trae: The policy applies to documents at City that are used by the public, such as forms that the public needs to fill out. Can get more specific information. The City contracts with a company to do the work.
 - ii. Chairwoman Walker: As a commission, is there anything in particular HRC can do to support DRE's work?
 - 1. Dion'trae: HRC has already started with their work supporting the nondiscrimination ordinance. Will keep HRC apprised of future opportunities to advance equity as they arise.

IV. Chair / Vice Chair Report

- a. Update: Human Rights Ordinance
 - i. Chairwoman Walker thanked the commission for their support to the updated human rights ordinance to protect 2SLGBTQIA+ and veteran communities. Councilor Bellis withdrew the item for a vote due to misinformation being spread. Chairwoman Walker read portion of Councilor Bellis's public statement.
 - 1. HRC could play a role in educating councilors and the Tulsa community in the future. Chairwoman Walker noted that HRC could add a third goal focused on ordinance or could integrate this effort into an existing goal.
 - ii. Commission Discussion
 - 1. Commissioner Pilehvar: Worth being a separate project, but based on preliminary data related to Goal Two, these items could go together. To increase representation, people need to know what the ordinances are.
 - 2. Commissioner Barros noted that the ordinance could fit with increasing access to filing human rights complaints, as a big focus of that working group is education.
 - iii. Chairwoman Walker will come back to HRC with an action plan.
- b. Report: Compassionate Tulsa
 - i. Chairwoman Walker updated the commission that the Compassionate Tulsan nomination form is now available in Spanish on Compassionate Tulsa's (CT) website, as recommended by the commission.



- ii. Governor Stitt initiated Operation SAFE. The stated purpose is to restore order and safety in Tulsa by reducing homeless encampments, picking up trash, and reducing criminal activity on state-owned properties. Unhoused individuals would have the choice to go to a treatment facility, homeless shelter, or jail. Undocumented immigrants would be handed over to ICE. Concerns include lack of consultation with Mayor Nichols, interference with efforts to alleviate homelessness (such as Safe Move Tulsa), and insufficient resources (such as shelter space).
- iii. CT issued a statement to Tulsa World responding to Governor Stitt's Operation SAFE. Chairwoman Walker read the statement (Appendix 1).
- iv. Chairwoman Walker invited discussion of if HRC would like to issue a similar statement or take a different action.
 - 1. Commissioner Dave Walker: The state cut funding to mental health services to the point that some will have to close, then they are uprooting those who are most in need of those resources. This operation hasn't done anything to address problems, including addiction and mental health. Over twice as many homeless individuals connect to shelters now due to outreach services. Don't see an end goal with this effort.
 - 2. Commissioner Barros: Channel 6 reported that only one additional person was connected to a shelter.
 - 3. Commissioner Rogers: The operation made the problem worse. People are still homeless, not getting help they need, and there is no money for support services such as mental health. It is a disservice to play politics with people's lives. People lost documents and have to figure out how to get ID's now. Wish HRC could do something besides write a strong letter.
 - 4. Commissioner Barros: Also important that we're staying true to our commitment of a compassionate Tulsa, not just when there is a public stunt. The sidewalk ordinance passed by City Council affects those experiencing homelessness, though hasn't been signed by Mayor Nichols yet. There are opportunities within Tulsa's policies to ensure harm is not perpetuated.
- v. Chairwoman Walker proposed starting to draft a statement. Commission agreed that would be an acceptable starting point.
- c. Update: Humanitarian of the Year
 - i. Vice Chair France: 2025 will be the fourth year of the Humanitarian of the Year Award.
 - ii. This year, HRC will honoring two Tulsans. Some themes emerged that tie the two awardees together: using the arts as a vehicle to improve our community and a lifetime of achievement.
 - iii. Awardees: Maybelle Wallace (Greater Tulsa Area African American Affairs Commissioner) and Winnie Guess Perdue (Greater Tulsa Area Indian Affairs Commissioner)
 - iv. The ceremony is on December 11 at 6pm, Mayor Nichols will be the keynote speaker.

V. Committee Updates Aligned with 2025 HRC Goals



- a. Vice Chair France: Improve access to the City of Tulsa Department of Resilience and Equity's resources
 - i. Recently met with the City Clerk and Jack Blair (head of City Legal) to discuss modernizing the complaints process. There was clear agreement about where we are and where we want to be in the near future.
 - 1. Tulsans can currently mail in complaints and are accepted at City Clerk's office.
 - ii. Jack clarified opportunities to modernize by removing "City Clerk" from the ordinance. There is still a role for the City Clerk's office to help with document storage.
 - iii. Currently, there aren't clear to-dos in this process that the working group can contribute to.
 - iv. Dion'trae added that she, Lexi, and La Kendra will work with IT to determine next steps with electronic options and will keep Vice Chair France updated.
- b. Commissioner Pilehvar: Increase diverse representation and equitable recruitment practices across all City of Tulsa ABCs
 - i. Commissioner Pilehvar reminded HRC this goal is based on the Equality Indicator #49.
 - ii. Received anonymized data for 290+ members of the City's authorities, boards, and commissions (ABCs).
 - iii. Since it has been some time since committees were selected, Commissioner Pilehvar reopened the invitation to commissioner who wants to be involved in this project.
 - iv. Question to ponder: What does it mean to have diverse and equitable representation?
 - v. Commissioner Pilehvar noted some of her preliminary observations, including differences between age demographics in the Tulsa population versus what is represented on ABCs and that residents from City Council districts 4 and 9 make up more than half of ABC members.
 - vi. Action Items: Finding the right data to compare to, identify which dimension of diversity the group will address first.
 - vii. Vice Chair France asked which is the lowest represented district, Commissioner Pilehvar answered that it is districts 5 and 3. Vice Chair France reflected that district is an important way to think about diverse representation.

VI. Committee, Liaison, and Title V Commissions Calls for Action – no calls for action

VII. Update and Possible Action: Tulsa Community Foundation Account

- a. Vice Chair France received a draft agreement to open an account soon before the meeting, so the commission will postpone review and possible action until next meeting.

VIII. Old Business

- a. Discussion: Possible HRC Response to Denver Ave. Boulder Installation
 - i. Chairwoman Walker read an email from Dana Walton, Mayor Nichols's Chief of Staff, with an official response regarding the boulders.
 - ii. Commissioner Barros renewed the request for data that demonstrates that this decision addresses safety concerns. Doesn't feel her question of how this is an intervention for safety is resolved.



- iii. Commissioner McNeil shared it feels similar to moving people along or displacing people without long-term solutions.
- iv. Chairwoman Walker committed to responding to Dana.

IX. New Business – no new business

X. Announcements / Public Comments

- a. Welcoming Week Events:
 - i. Understanding Higher Education: Guide for Immigrant and Refugee Students (Tuesday at 11:30 at TCC's Northeast Campus)
 - ii. Internationally Skilled Immigrants Workshop (Thursday at 5:30 at 7 N Cheyenne)
 - iii. Connector Program Launch (Friday at noon at City Hall)
 - iv. Who is my Neighbor hosted by ACTION Tulsa (Saturday at 10am at St. Mary Church)
- b. Public Comments
 - i. Councilor Dutton talked about data available through the Neighborhood Conditions Index.

XI. Adjournment

- a. Chairwoman Walker entertained a motion to adjourn.
 - i. Commissioner Rogers made a motion, Commissioner Cipolla seconded.
 - 1. Aye: 9
 - ii. Motion carried, motion adjourned at 4:38 pm.



Appendix 1

Compassionate Tulsa Statement

In 2014 the Tulsa City Council and Mayor's office signed on to the International Charter for Compassion and pledged to become an even more compassionate city. The essence of that action was a pledge: to "do unto others as you would have them do to you" and to act to relieve suffering and uphold the dignity of all persons. The recent actions, authorized by the Governor, against our neighbors who live on public lands, are cruel in effect and the antithesis of compassionate action. Simply displacing persons, bulldozing and trashing their belongings, are ineffective actions that increase suffering. The causes of living unhoused remain unaddressed. While we sympathize with business owners and fellow citizens who deal daily with the consequences of the dearth of affordable housing, public sanitation stations, and health care, the Governor's program leaves those consequences untouched. Furthermore, this "operation" is inconsistent with Tulsa's better angels, with our commitment to become an even more compassionate city. What we in Tulsa, and around the nation, need is for our elected officials and state and local agencies to act to relieve suffering through compassionate policies and sustainable, effective practices. We commend the Mayor's and City Council's recent initiatives, along with the many non-profits and volunteers who work daily to fulfil the commitment the city made a decade ago to act in ways that relieve rather than increase suffering.