

FARGO HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

2008 STRATEGIC PLAN

The Mission of the Fargo Human Relations Commission is to promote acceptance and respect for diversity and discourage all forms of discrimination.

The City of Fargo values human diversity and works to promote equal opportunities in housing, employment, and social climate. The Fargo Human Relations Commission is committed to working in the area of human rights development in the community. The purpose of this document is to provide the Fargo Human Relations Commission a course of action to best communicate human relations issues to individuals and groups in Fargo.

Background

In May 2000, Mayor Bruce Furness organized a group of residents for a series of meetings to discuss the need for an organization that would address human relations issues in Fargo. Over that period of time, the study group met with a number of local stakeholders in addition to specialists at the state and national level.

The study group found that a human relations commission in Fargo would be beneficial. On October 16, 2000, the Fargo City Commission created the Fargo Human Relations Commission to serve as an advisory board to the Fargo City Commission. Shortly after, nine commissioners were appointed and formally met for the first time on November 17, 2000.

Currently, the Fargo Human Relations Commission members are:

- Prairie Rose – **Chair**
- Janeen Kobrinsky – **Vice Chair**
- Fowzia Adde
- Josh Boschee
- Hatem Nour
- Mitch Marr
- Joy Rice
- Yoke Sim Gunaratne
- (Vacant)

The Strategic Plan

Outlined in this document are a specific set of objectives and strategies that are built on three main goals:

- 1. Measure and monitor community relations and civil rights issues.**
- 2. Educate the community on civil rights.**
- 3. Encourage adherence to federal and state civil rights laws.**

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Goal 1: Measure and monitor community relations and civil rights issues.

The importance of reversing the trend towards a society made up of “haves” and “have-nots” is a recurring theme in the Fargo Human Relations Commission’s (FHRC) planning process. In order to accomplish that goal, the FHRC decided it must routinely measure and monitor community relations and report the status of human relations to the City Commission. The first goal seeks to provide a means for gathering and sharing information in order to encourage human relations development in Fargo.

Objective A: Community assessment. Establish baseline data to give the Fargo Human Relations Commission information needed to prioritize and evaluate activities.

Objective B: Operating procedures. Establish a process that the FHRC can use to conduct its business in an open and understandable manner.

Objective C: Evaluation. Measure the success and performance of the FHRC.

Goal 2: Educate the community on civil rights.

In the metropolitan area there are a number of individuals and organizations that work to provide citizens with the opportunity to live unhampered by unlawful discrimination. The Fargo Human Relations is part of that effort. The second goal seeks to provide all members of the community (including individuals, the business sector, faith community, universities, youth and underrepresented populations) with resources and activities that will strengthen efforts to increase acceptance and build inclusion.

Objective A: Understanding and Acceptance. Promote awareness by educating the community on human relations issues and increasing human relations resources available to the public.

Objective B: Respond to hate. Promptly respond to critical issues as they arise in the community.

Objective C: Events and Activities. Participate in events that emphasize strength in diversity and the positive aspects of the community.

Goal 3: Encourage adherence to federal and state civil rights laws.

The most effective way to address divisiveness is to build coalitions and formulate widespread support for policies that promote inclusiveness. The third goal seeks to address the needs of those who are becoming increasingly isolated because of unlawful discrimination. To do this, the FHRC should help to secure effective avenues for community sustainability and adherence to civil rights laws.

Objective A: Stakeholders. Identify existing human relations resources.

Objective B: Record keeping. Document existing civil rights resources and determine if they are sufficient.

Objective C: Recognition. Reward good human relations practices.

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2008 STRATEGIC PLAN ACTIVITIES

The Fargo Human Relations Commission is committed to promoting equal opportunities and working to create a climate where differences are valued. It contends that as a City, we must do no less -- by maintaining an environment that is respectful to the rights, dignity, and individuality of each member of the community. The following is a list of specific activities the Fargo Human Relations Commission is committed to working on in the area of human relations development in 2008.

1. Continue to develop the process for handling and publicizing public inquiries and discrimination complaints

- Continuously analyze previous inquiries and complaints, and address systemic inequality issues
- Investigate ways to strengthen follow-up in complaint resolution, keep affected parties and stakeholders involved and informed
- Create a measurement tool and annual report on the state of human relations in the FM area
- Begin to document informal discrimination complaints
- Engage with the Department of Labor and Equal Employment Opportunities Commission to ensure collaboration and consistency

Lead Commissioners: FHRC Executive Committee

2. Continue with the *Know Your Rights* campaign, promoting Fargo as a welcoming community and providing equal opportunity information on housing, employment, and public accommodations

- Work with student volunteers to complete *Know Your Rights* cards and website that provides information on basic rights, translated into different languages
- Provide basic rights information at orientations and other forums
- Continue to focus on pertinent topics, including health issues and those that may be periodically revealed in the discrimination complaints

Lead Commissioners: Fowzia Adde, Mitch Marr, Prairie Rose, Joy Rice and community members (Know Your Rights Committee)

3. Promote acceptance and respect for diversity -- take diversity to the mainstream

- Sponsor an annual community-wide commemoration on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and consider changes to its format
Lead Commissioners: *Janeen Kobrinsky, Joy Rice and Prairie Rose* (MLK/Events Committee)
- Evaluate process of Fargo's annual Human Relations Awards, define criteria and consider new categories
Lead Commissioners: *Janeen Kobrinsky and Joy Rice*
- Continue efforts to name a street in the FM area after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and name the 12th Avenue North bridge after Gladys Ray, for a lifetime of service to the homeless and Native American populations in the FM area
Lead Commissioners: *Janeen Kobrinsky, Prairie Rose*
- Continue to coordinate hate crime prevention and response plan activities, working with Minnesota Extension Services and the Pride Collective. Also revive partnerships with police and GLBT communities
Lead Commissioners: *Yoke Sim Gunaratne, Joy Rice, Prairie Rose and Mitch Marr*
- Continue collaborative efforts with individuals and organizations interested in human rights
Lead Commissioners: *Amy Phillips and Fowzia Adde*

- Focus on publicity and Marketing in order to increase community-wide awareness of the Human Relations Commission.

Lead Commissioners: *Mitch Marr, Joy Rice, Prairie Rose* (Publicity and Marketing Committee)

4. Work to sustain the Commission’s ability to support area events and organizations interested in human relations through efficient and realistic budgeting processes

- Look at areas where spending can be streamlined

Lead Commissioners: *Hatem Nour, Prairie Rose and Yoke Sim Gunaratne* (Budget and Sponsorships Committee)

- Search for alternative sources of funding support

Lead Commissioners: *Hatem Nour, Prairie Rose and Yoke Sim Gunaratne* (Budget and Sponsorships Committee)

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2008 STRATEGIC PLAN ACTIVITIES

Ongoing Staff Responsibilities

- Gather research data from public and private organizations, in addition to local, state and federal government resources
- Network with other HRC’s and advocacy organizations to identify “best practices”
- Respond to complaints and questions
- Track and repeat baseline assessments
- Coordinate data sharing and gather feedback from stakeholders
- Monitor human relations issues in the community by collecting correspondence of HRC importance (i.e. letters to the editor, newspaper articles, TV news stories)
- Monitor outcomes and follow-up on public inquiries
- Work to promote diversity in the community
- Collect and distribute materials relating to civil rights
- Meet acts of hate with messages of unity by working with affected individuals and organizations in a timely manner
- Assist in the resolution of civil rights related tensions
- Assist in the creation and implementation of human relations awareness events and cultural festivals
- Coordinate community awareness efforts and recognition with the Moorhead Human Rights Commission, ND Fair Housing Council and ND Labor Department
- Identify who enforces existing civil rights laws and how
- Tie existing laws and enforcement mechanisms to HRC procedures
- Recognize and encourage positive human relations acts and activities

Ordinance 4081, Article 15-02 – Fargo Human Relations Commission

Section:

15-0201 -- Creation of Human Relations Commission.

15-0202 -- Number of members--Term of members--Appointment of members--Filling vacancies.

15-0203 -- President of commission--Meetings--Record to be kept.

15-0204 -- Goals of the Human Relations Commission

15-0205 -- Powers and duties of commission.

15-0206 -- Commission advisory in nature.

15-0201. Creation of Human Relations Commission -- There is hereby created and established a body to be known as the Human Relations Commission, whose purpose is to promote the acceptance and respect for diversity through educational programs and activities and to discourage all forms of discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, the presence of any mental or physical disability, status with regard to marriage or public assistance, participation in lawful activity off the employer's premise during nonworking hours which is not in direct conflict with the essential business-related interests of the employer or sexual orientation. (2000).

15-0202. Number of Members--Term of Members--Appointment of Members--Filling Vacancies -- The Human Relations Commission shall consist of nine members, who shall be appointed by the president of the board of city commissioners, subject to confirmation by the Board of City Commissioners. The terms of office of such commissioners shall be as follows, to wit: three members who shall serve until July 1, 2001; three members who shall serve until July 1, 2002; and three members who shall serve until July 1, 2003. At the expiration of the terms of the members as aforesaid, members shall be appointed for three-year terms. If a vacancy occurs otherwise then by expiration of a term, it shall be filled by appointment for the unexpired portion of the term. Notwithstanding the expiration of a member's term, such member may serve until his or her successor has been appointed and qualified. (2000).

15-0203. President of commission--Meetings--Record to be kept -- The Human Relations Commission shall elect its president for a term of one year from among the appointed members and shall hold regular monthly meetings. The commission shall keep a record of its resolutions, findings and the determinations and such record shall be a public record. The commission may appoint such subcommittees from among the appointed members as it may be necessary for its work. (2000).

15-0204. Goals of the Human Relations Commission -- The goals of the Human Relations Commission are:

- A. To provide leadership in the areas of civil rights.
- B. To encourage and educate the public in the promotion of civil rights.
- C. To identify issues of principal concern to members of the community in the area of civil rights and to recommend priorities and objectives to the board of city commissioners.
- D. To encourage adherence to federal and state laws regarding civil rights, including Chapter 14-02.4 of the North Dakota Century Code, through education, conciliation and mediation. (2000).

15-0205. Powers and Duties of Commission -- The Human Relations Commission shall:

- A. Recommend to the board of city commissioners, from time to time, action and programs in furtherance of the purpose of the Human Relations Commission as described in this article.
- B. Consult and advise with public officials and agencies and with private individuals and organizations to provide education regarding civil rights. The commission may, in its discretion, assist aggrieved individuals, but such assistance shall consist of information, guidance and, in its discretion, conciliation and mediation services. (2000).

15-0206. Commission advisory in nature -- The Human Relations Commission shall be advisory in nature and shall submit all reports and determinations to the board of city commissioners of the city of Fargo. Final authority shall be in the board of city commissioners. (2000).