

**Red Wing Human Rights Commission
Regular Meeting
City Hall Council Chambers
July 24, 2025**

Members Present: Chair Kathyne LeMieux; Commissioners Beth Breeden, Gabrielle Magill, Joe Bigalke, Jeremy Light, Skog Featherstone, and Kim Hudson (arrived at 6:06 p.m.)

Members Absent: All members were in attendance

Others Present: Cara Kvanbek, Staff Liaison; Becky Norton, Council Liaison; Gary Iocco, Mayor

1. Call to Order

Chair LeMieux called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair LeMieux led the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. HRC Mission Statement

Commissioner Featherstone was asked to read the HRC Mission Statement.

4. Roll Call

Roll call was conducted. Chair LeMieux and Commissioners Breeden, Bigalke, Magill, Light, and Featherstone were in attendance along with Council Liaison Norton and Staff Liaison Kvanbek. Commissioner Hudson arrived at 6:06 p.m.

5. Approval of Agenda

A motion was made by Commissioner Featherstone, seconded by Commissioner Breeden, to approve the agenda as presented.

6. Swearing In of New Commissioners Joe Bigalke, Jeremy Light, and Skog Featherstone

Mayor Iocco administered the Oath of Office for Commissioners Bigalke, Light, and Featherstone.

Chair LeMieux thanked Mayor Iocco for assisting with the recruitment of new HRC members. Mayor Iocco thanked HRC members for their service. He commented that the HRC is an important commission and stated his goal to recommend the appointment of a diverse group of members to represent Red Wing.

7. Approval of Minutes

A. One Motion to Approve September 26, 2024, October 24, 2024, October 17, 2024, and June 26, 2025, Minutes.

A motion was made by Commissioner Breeden to approve the minutes as drafted. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Light, a vote was conducted, and the motion carried.

8. Motions & General Business

A. Finance Report.

Staff Liaison Kvanbek provided a Finance Report. She reported a balance of \$2,500 in the HRC budget, with \$6,350.23 from the 2024 budget and the 2025 budget, pending City Council approval to encumber. Council Liaison Norton reviewed the process of encumbering funds from prior years.

Commissioner Breeden referenced past discussion of covering childcare expenses for HRC members. Council Liaison Norton stated that this was a policy change approved by the City Council years ago to encourage greater participation by community members on City boards and commissions. She clarified that this expense would not be deducted from the HRC budget.

B. Motion to Approve Amos Owen Flyer and Accepting Nominations for the Amos Owen Award Starting August 1, 2025, and Closing September 18, 2025.

This item was discussed following the presentation (Item 9A).

Chair LeMieux discussed flyer distribution, including at River City Days and as potential utility bill inserts. Staff Liaison Kvanbek stated that City staff would be able to provide assistance.

Commissioner Breeden commented that the original intent of the award was to honor the humanitarian work of Amos Owen. She suggested focusing the award criteria on both human rights and humanitarian accomplishments.

Chair LeMieux summarized a recent discussion with the brother of Amos Owen, who agreed with a human rights focus for the award criteria. She discussed the differences between humanitarian awards and human rights awards and provided examples. She referenced the definition that was added to the flyer:

“Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and unalienable rights of all members of the human family as the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world.”

Chair LeMieux also referenced the mission of the Human Rights Commission. Commissioners expressed support for the flyer as presented.

A motion was made by Commissioner Featherstone to approve the flyer as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Magill. A vote was conducted and the motion carried by a vote of 5:0, with Commissioners Breeden and Hudson abstaining from the vote.

C. Motion to Approve Expense for Cake, Award Plaque, and Other Items Needed for the Amos Owen Award Presentation.

Staff Liaison Kvanbek reviewed estimated award presentation expenses, based on the 2024 expenses. She suggested allocating an amount from the HRC budget toward Amos Owen Award expenses. Chair LeMieux referenced a past essay contest, and it was noted that this was in conjunction with Black History Month. Staff Liaison Kvanbek reviewed the cost associated with including flyer inserts with utility bills, noting that the cost of a half page flyer would be \$340.50/ She noted that Communications Coordinator Courtney Jacob would manage the process. The benefits of the mailing were discussed.

A motion was made by Commissioner Featherstone to approve a half page flyer insert. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bigalke. Commissioner Breeden commented that some expenses associated with an MLK Day event in January may need to be paid in December. She discussed other ways to promote the Amos Owen Award nomination process. She commented that only homeowners receive utility bills. She suggested allocating these funds toward other HRC activities. The HRC budget was discussed. Commissioner Hudson agreed with the comments made by Commissioner Breeden. Staff Liaison Kvanbek discussed the online nomination process, noting that paper nomination forms will not be an option. Chair LeMieux inquired regarding alternative promotion mechanisms. Commissioner Breeden reiterated suggestions in this regard, including posting flyers at local businesses, word of mouth advertising, radio and newspaper promotion, and Channel 6 programming. She expressed concerns about cuts to HRC budget funding and expressed skepticism that some people would not receive the flyers. Chair LeMieux cautioned against making decisions based on potential future funding cuts. Commissioner Hudson commented that there may be unanticipated projects or expenses that arise before the end of the year.

Following discussion a vote was conducted. Commissioners Featherstone, Bigalke, LeMieux, Magill, and Light voted aye; Commissioners Hudson and Breeden voted nay. Five ayes; two nays; motion carried.

D. Discussion to Choose a Date in October for the Amos Owen Award Presentation.

Council Liaison Norton provided historical information pertaining to the Amos Owen Award presentation and reception. She stated that last year the City Council encouraged boards and commissions to host their own award presentations. She noted that last year the HRC opted to host the award presentation in conjunction with an HRC meeting.

It was suggested to discuss plans for the award presentation during the August workshop, with final plans and expenses to be voted on during the September meeting.

Commissioner Featherstone suggested forming a committee to discuss options and provide recommendations. Council Liaison Norton commented that Chair LeMieux has the authority to appoint ad hoc committee members. Commissioners Light and Featherstone volunteered to serve on the committee with Chair LeMieux.

Council Liaison Norton clarified options for hosting an Amos Owen Award presentation. Past presentations were discussed.

A motion was made by Commissioner Featherstone for the HRC to host the Amos Owen Award during the HRC meeting in October. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bigalke. A vote was conducted and the motion carried by a vote of 6:0, with Commissioner Hudson abstaining from the vote. Potential dates were discussed.

Following discussion of Item 10A, Council Liaison Norton suggested revisiting the date discussion, noting that an HRC workshop is scheduled in October. Suggested dates for the presentation included October 16 and October 23, with the event to be held in the City Council Chambers.

A motion was made by Commissioner Featherstone to strike the initial motion and schedule the Amos Owen Award presentation in the City Council Chambers on either October 16 (first choice) or October 23 (second choice). The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bigalke. Chair LeMieux elected to allow public comment regarding this item.

Michael Lickness Holmes, Red Wing, suggested scheduling the presentation on October 16, as this would be the closest date to Chief Red Wing Day. It was clarified that the meeting space needs to be confirmed.

Following discussion a vote was conducted and the motion carried unanimously.

E. Other Discussion.

Commissioner Hudson commented regarding the number of community organizations that request financial support from the HRC, noting that the HRC does not receive a lot of support from community groups. She suggested utilizing HRC funds toward projects that would directly benefit the community and provided examples. Chair LeMieux discussed past HRC initiatives and conference attendance. She encouraged HRC members to suggest ideas. Commissioner Hudson stated that the role of the HRC is to help people, noting that the HRC is not providing assistance to people seeking help.

Commissioner Featherstone commented that the HRC is an advisory body of the City that must abide by certain rules. She suggested connecting with other organizations that have a greater ability to create change. She commented that HRC members are volunteers with other obligations and commitments.

Staff Liaison Kvanbek suggested inviting trained experts to provide presentations to the HRC. Commissioner Breeden discussed a past “All are Welcome” initiative and suggested bringing this back. Commissioner Light discussed his work with immigrants and asked about a potential conflict of interest. Council Liaison Norton clarified that HRC members can advocate for other organizations but would not be able to make motions or vote on decisions that would benefit them or organizations they have a relationship with. Council Liaison Norton offered to facilitate a brainstorming and prioritizing session during a future meeting or workshop.

Commissioner Bigalke suggested that the HRC consider having a presence within the school system in order to serve as human rights ambassadors and advocate for suicide awareness and autism awareness. Chair LeMieux suggested adding this topic to a future workshop agenda. She referenced other advocacy groups and suggested further discussion of an HRC student advisory member. It was suggested to email suggestions to Staff Liaison Kvanbek.

9. Presentation

A. DSI Triathlon.

The guest speaker was introduced following discussion of Item 8A.

Jennie Wendland introduced herself as a former HRC member and as the cofounder and Executive Director of the Disability Support International (DSI) nonprofit organization. She provided information about DSI and its mission to better the rights and human services of people living with disabilities in the developing world.

Ms. Wendland discussed the DSI Triathlon and Inclusive 4K fundraising event on September 20. She reviewed the event flyer, stating that the event is open to participation by people of all ages and abilities. She asked the HRC to help promote the event and raise awareness about DSI. She also requested that the HRC consider a financial sponsorship of the event to help offset some of the expenses. She referenced the shared values of DSI and the HRC and stated that there would be an opportunity to host a table during the event.

Commissioner Featherstone requested more information about the tabling opportunity and the expectations. Ms. Wendland discussed the start time and anticipated duration of the event. She referenced past event sponsors. Commissioner Featherstone asked whether the HRC presence at the event would be contingent upon a commitment of financial support. Ms. Wendland indicated that financial support would be requested.

Chair LeMieux asked whether a specific amount is being requested in terms of financial support. Ms. Wendland reviewed the sponsorship levels and benefits.

Commissioner Breeden offered to assist with flyer distribution.

A motion was made by Commissioner Breeden to approve a \$250 sponsorship for the DSI Triathlon event. Chair LeMieux suggested consideration of a \$500 sponsorship and asked whether funds would be available in the HRC budget. Council Liaison Norton referenced the HRC budget balance of \$2,500 and clarified that the use of encumbered funds has not been approved. Commissioner Breeden stated that she would be open to amending the motion to increase the sponsorship to \$500, if funds were available. Chair LeMieux referenced past HRC events and expenses. The motion to approve a \$250 sponsorship was seconded by Commissioner Hudson. A vote was conducted. Commissioners LeMieux, Hudson, and Breeden voted aye; Commissioners Light and Featherstone voted nay. A second motion was made by Commissioner Featherstone to approve a \$500 sponsorship of the DSI Triathlon event. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Light. A vote was conducted and the motion carried by a vote of 6:1, with Commissioner Hudson voting nay.

Commissioner Hudson expressed concerns that the HRC may have additional expenses that will need to be covered. Anticipated expenses relating to the Amos Owen Award were discussed. It was discussed that 2026 event expenses would be covered by 2026 budget funding. Staff Liaison Kvanbek commented that expenses related to potential utility bill inserts would be discussed later during the meeting.

Council Liaison Norton clarified that the City Council determines budget allocations for boards and commissions during the annual budget planning process. She also referenced past Council Member discussion of potentially eliminating certain boards and commissions, noting that continued support and funding is not guaranteed.

It was discussed that the intention of the second motion was to increase the sponsorship amount from \$250 to \$500.

A motion was made by Commissioner Featherstone to clarify the approval of an HRC budget allocation of \$500 toward sponsorship of the DSI Triathlon event. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bigalke. A vote was conducted and the motion carried by a vote of 6:0, with Commissioner Hudson abstaining from the vote.

Chair LeMieux commented regarding the increasing cost of hosting events. Ms. Wendland expressed appreciation for the support. It was suggested to add an agenda item to the August workshop related to tabling and promotion of the event. Chair LeMieux encouraged HRC members to consider volunteering to staff an HRC table at the event, and Commissioners Featherstone and Bigalke offered to volunteer.

10. Communication Items

A. Red Wing Human Rights Resource Connection Update and Discussion about Adding the Flyer to the Utility Building.

This topic was discussed following discussion of Item 8.

Flyer distribution was discussed. Commissioners expressed no interest in including flyers with utility bills at this time. It was noted that the email address will need to be changed. Council Liaison Norton provided suggestions for other flyer text edits.

A motion was made by Commissioner Featherstone, seconded by Commissioner Magill, to not add the Human Rights Resource Connection flyer to utility bills. A vote was conducted and the motion carried by a vote of 6:0, with Commissioner Hudson abstaining from the vote.

A motion was made by Chair LeMieux to print revised flyers and make these available for HRC members to distribute. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Breeden. Commissioner Featherstone offered an amendment to laminate some of the flyers and provided rationale for this suggestion. Chair LeMieux and Commissioner Breeden expressed agreement with laminating 20 of the flyers. Following discussion a vote was conducted and the motion carried by a vote of 6:0, with Commissioner Hudson abstaining from the vote.

B. Review and Discuss the 5-Year Plan of the Human Rights Commission.

It was unanimously decided to table this item and add this topic to the agenda for the August workshop.

C. Commissioner Comments.

There were no Commissioner comments.

D. What's Happening in the Community.

No comments were offered.

11. Public Comment

Amber Dawn Plank, Ward 4, Red Wing, expressed concerns regarding behavior toward Commissioner Hudson. She commented that Commissioner Hudson has been subjected to excess scrutiny, including focusing on punctuality rather than community progress. She stated that a data practices request revealed that one HRC member attempted to get another HRC member removed by engaging in gossip about Commissioner Hudson. Ms. Plank described Commissioner Hudson as a force for good. She noted that holding people accountable makes people uncomfortable. She stated that standards of scrutiny must be applied equally/ Ms. Plank commented that the Human Rights Commission should be a safe place that protects people from harm, not a place where harm is quietly coordinated. She also called out a system of double standards that continues to punish people of color while rewarding others for simply showing up.

Ms. Plank described Commissioner Hudson's comment that the HRC is not helping people as valid. She referenced condescending comments that were made to Commissioner Hudson during the meeting.

Chair LeMieux thanked Ms. Plank for the feedback. She stated that she values and encourages diversity. She commented regarding miscommunication and stated that she has not and will not discuss personal business.

Amber Dawn Plank, Ward 4, Red Wing, provided a rebuttal to the comments made by Chair LeMieux. She raised concerns regarding the integrity of the appointment process for City boards and commissions, particularly involving Mayor Iocco. She relayed her personal experience in this regard. She stated that if the City truly values equity and transparency, every applicant should deserve to be treated with the same level of dignity, neutrality, and fairness. She stated that inconsistent treatment undermines confidence in the integrity of the process. She referenced information that she obtained through a data request relating to the contents of City emails. She stated that, if she had been appointed to the HRC, she would have resigned after the first meeting because of the way HRC meetings are conducted.

Chair LeMieux suggested further discussion of increased transparency relating to the appointment process. Commissioner Hudson commented that board and commission members should be involved in the appointment process. It was suggested to add this topic to a future workshop agenda. Council Liaison Norton provided information from the City Charter regarding the duties of the Mayor. She reviewed the current appointment process and agreed with discussion of the concerns by the HRC. Commissioner Hudson clarified her recommendation to involve others in the process, in addition to the Mayor. Commissioner Breeden relayed her experience with the appointment process. She commented that applicants have been encouraged to attend meetings prior to being appointed to boards and commissions. Chair LeMieux noted that Ms. Plank left the meeting prior to the conclusion of the discussion. Staff Liaison Kvanbek provided additional comments regarding the board and commission application and appointment process, noting that applications are kept on file for a year. Commissioner Hudson expressed other concerns about the HRC appointment process, noting that applicants who applied in January were not contacted until May, making it appear that there was a lack of interest in serving on the HRC.

Chair LeMieux commented that the times of arrival and departure of board and commission members are noted. Commissioner Hudson provided rationale for being late at times. Commissioner Magill stated that meeting attendance was stressed to her as being very important.

Chair LeMieux suggested discussion of potentially changing the meeting start time. Staff Liaison Kvanbek asked HRC members to let her know if they will be late or are unable to attend a meeting.

Council Liaison Norton suggested HRC discussion of ways to increase public engagement in local government and whether it is equitable to hold members to extremely rigid expectations.

12. Adjournment

Chair LeMieux adjourned the meeting at 8:11 p.m.