City of Albert Lea
Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes

October 22, 2026 Meeting – 6:00pm
Room 109, City Hall - 221 E. Clark Street

Members Present: Rev. Dr. Charles Alkula, Aruna Evenson, Irasema, Hernandez, Peggy Olson, and Ex-Officio Keith Van Beek

Members Absent: Jeremy Corey-Gruenes, Cesar Victorino and Angie Hanson

Staff in Attendance: Human Resource Director Mike Zelenak, and Administrative Assistant/Deputy Clerk Karla Tukua

Staff Absent: City Manager Rigg

Call to Order:
The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm by Commission Chair Charles Alkula.

Adopt Agenda:
Peggy Olson made the motion to approve the agenda and Angie Hanson seconded the motion. All commission members present voted in favor of said motion. Motion passes.

Approval of Minutes:
Aruna Evenson made the motion to approve the minutes of the July 09, 2026 meeting and Peggy Olson seconded the motion. All commission members present voted in favor of said motion. Motion passes.

New Business:
Recap of the Out of Darkness Walk Event – Peggy & Aruna
Olson stated that overall, it was good event. The day itself was kind of cold and drizzly. The event organizers moved the location to the Presbyterian Church due to the weather. Olson said in regards to past events, it wasn't as well attended, but the weather could have been a factor in attendance. Evenson had nothing more to add.

Student Representative Application review, Jaelani William, Jar Pa and Benjamin Severtson
Commission members reviewed the applications received and Tukua provided Corey-Gruenes's recap of candidates. Tukua reviewed the e-mail that was sent out regarding the applicants and how to rate them, designating a rating of 1, 2 & 3, based on their application. Applicant 1 and 2 would be the two chosen to serve as Student Representatives. After commission review and discussion, Jaelani William and Jar Pa were chosen.

Angie Hanson made the motion to extend the invitation to Jaelani William to serve as Student Representative on the Human Rights Commission and Peggy Olson seconded the motion. All commission members present voted in favor of said motion. Motion passes.

Peggy Olson made the motion to extend the invitation to Jar Pa to serve as the second Student Representative on the Human Rights Commission and Angie Hanson seconded the motion. All commission members present voted in favor of said motion. Motion passes.

Tukua will send out letters to both Jaelani and Jar, letting them know of their appointment. She will also send a letter to Benjamin letting him know of the commission's choice for the 2026/2027 school year, and to encourage him to reapply for next year.

Old Business:

Vote on Subcommittee – Human Rights Day

Angie Hanson made the motion to have Irasema Hernandez, Peggy Olson and Aruna Evenson serve on the sub-committee for the planning of Human Rights Day event. Alkula seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor of said motion. Motion passes.

Hanson stated she'll be available the last two (2) weeks of November to help with planning, otherwise she is unavailable. She added that she is available to work all day of the event.

Planning Human Rights Day Event – Saturday Dec. 5th

Olson put together a sign-up sheet of commission members to sign up for as many shifts as they can help with. She will send the sign-up sheet to Tukua for her to send to the group.

Evenson asked what the sub-committed would need approval on, to which Zelenak said anything that they would be spending money on, would need approval. Everything else, the subcommittee can approve. There was discussion on what food could or could not be served, based on regulations. Olson said she would check with Hernandez on who she had been in contact with that was a licensed caterer.

Items already decided:

- Evenson said that she will have Blu-Nail there to do nails, also someone to do basic haircuts/trims.
- Olson said she will be reaching out to Freeborn County for someone to do blood pressure, etc.

Ideas:

- Instead of offering food at event, think about reaching out to food trucks to be there. – There was discussion on food, Nels Diner, Hot Mess Express and the Moose all were suggested. Hanson will reach out to Nels Diner to see if they could be at the event. Evenson has reached out to Hot Mess Express.
- Zelenak suggested utilizing Park & Rec for the kids activities, he said if they're available, they can bring a van with kids toys and games along with staff to help. He will reach out to see if they are available.

- Evenson mentioned she'd like the Let's Face It, face painter at the event for kids. This is the same person that did face painting for Wind Down Wednesday.

- Discussion on speaker for event. – Tukua asked if anyone had reviewed the speaker information that Jeremy had shared in his e-mail. No one mentioned reviewing the link to find out more about Dr. Hague. Tukua asked if they were looking for someone local, the flyer had mentioned hear from local leaders? Evenson and Olson said it would be nice to have someone local.
- Possible speakers discussed were, the Superintendent or Principal from Albert Lea Highschool, possibly the Mayor, Jean Eaton on Age Friendly Freeborn County to speak on needs of senior residents, Hanson spoke about Saw Kennedy, he's a local artist and has an interesting story. She suggested having him speak at the event. Hanson offered to reach out to Saw and ask if he'd be interested in speaking at the event. Possibly could have a number of speakers, mentioned one (1) at 11:00am, 12:00pm and 1:00pm.
- Olson said she would reach out to Jeremy Corey-Gruenes to see if he'd reach out to Sean Gaston the Principal of Albert Lea Highschool and see if he'd be available to speak.
- On additional resources the group said it would be good to have someone from Freeborn County Department of Human Services, and SEMCAC.

Advertising of event –

- Can be added to the Community Calendar from the CVB/City website.
- City of Albert Lea does various Facebook posts on events, can send to Teresa Kauffman or Cathy Malakowsky to have them post on the City's Facebook page.

Board Member Items: None

Staff Communications:

- Zelenak handed out flyers from Dept. of Human Rights regarding their role in helping anyone that feels they had been discriminated against. Also, the Minnesota Dept. of Labor and Industry for workers to know their workplace rights. These flyers are included in the HRC event box.
- Tukua questioned if the committee felt they would need an extra meeting to make sure they had everything planned for the event. After discussion they decided on adding an extra meeting on Monday, November 30th at 6:00pm, if needed.

Adjournment:
Motion to adjourn was made by Evenson and seconded by Hanson at 6:52pm. On a voice vote, all members present voted in favor of said motion. Meeting adjourned. Next meeting will be Thursday, November 12, 2026, at 6:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Karla Tukua

Karla Tukua
Human Rights Commission Secretary

Approved:

Rev. Dr. Charles Alkula
Human Rights Commission Chair