



**City of Albert Lea
Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes**

*March 12, 2026 Meeting – 6:00pm
City Council Chambers - 221 E. Clark Street*

Members Present: Rev. Dr. Charles Alkula, Aruna Evenson, Angie Hanson, Jeremy Corey-Gruenes, and Ex-Officio Keith Van Beek. Student Representative Rice Boettcher

Members Absent: Peggy Olson, Cesar Victorino and Irasema Hernandez

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

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Commission Chair Alkula

Adopt Agenda:

Corey-Gruenes made the motion to approve the agenda for tonight's meeting and Hanson seconded the motion. The commission voted in favor of said motion 4-0. Olson, Victorino and Hernandez were absent. Motion carried

Approval of Minutes:

Corey-Gruenes made the motion to approve the minutes from the February 12, 2026 meeting and Evenson seconded the motion. The commission voted in favor of said motion 4-0. Olson, Victorino and Hernandez were absent. Motion carried.

New Business:

A. Wind Down Wednesday Planning and Participation

Rigg will get a copy of the application from the CVB for participation at Wind Down Wednesday. He explained that the HRC should have a fun event/activity and handouts. There was discussion among members regarding what activity and/or items the Human Rights Commission can do and hand out to people attending.

- Activity suggestions – Dunk tank, bouncy house, giant Jenga or Connect Four game.
- Hand out suggestions – Stickers, crochet animals or small items. Zelenak added that the city has small trinket items w/City of Albert Lea logo that could be handed out. State of MN Human Rights website has pamphlets that could be handed out as well. Flyers with information about the commission and resources available in Albert Lea. Rigg stated he will get a QR code people attending could scan to access the HRC

web page on the City of Albert Lea website. Boettcher volunteered to make crochet items that could be sold and give proceeds as donations to non-profits. After more discussion it was decided to offer the crochet items as prizes to anyone that participated in the dunk tank, asking for a free-will donation.

Rigg said he'll get more information, first from the CVB on the application and second on what resources Park and Rec would have available. Rigg asked for a couple board members to meet and plan for Wind Down Wednesday. Hanson and Evenson volunteered to work as the sub-group to plan out the event. Wind Down Wednesday dates are June 10th, July 8th and August 12th.

Old Business:

A. Follow up on Letter Requesting Mayor and City Councilors to Issue a Statement Calling on Congress to remove DHS, ICE and CBP Agents from Albert Lea and State of Minnesota – Ian Rigg

Rigg informed commission members that the Mayor read the letter and had mentioned it at the Council Meeting, but no action will be taken outside of sharing with the Council. With the announcement of DHS/ICE draw down in Minnesota being one of the reasons no action will be taken. Rigg will forward the letter to the rest of the council if the Mayor hadn't already done so.

Corey-Gruenes presented an alternate request due to no action taken on request to Mayor and Council regarding removal of DHS, ICE and CBP agents. Corey-Gruenes distributed a Recommendation for Law Enforcement Transparency Policy to the rest of HRC members in attendance and staff present for their review. He explained that this proposal was successful in Mankato, MN and largely based on events there. He asked members present to take it home, read through it and it can be discussed at our next meeting. Hanson stated that even though the surge has ended and there are less agents here, they could still come back. She noted it would be a good policy to have.

Rigg explained that some of the requests in this policy are already policies of the Albert Lea Police Dept. He said the POST,(Police Officer Standards & Training) Board puts policies in place as it relates to Police Departments within Minnesota, which the ALPD would then adopt for their dept. Corey-Gruenes acknowledged that the Albert Lea Police Dept. does have a body camera policy but was unsure on the rest.

Zelenak said that when the City writes a policy, it is just for the City. The policy would be written for the Albert Lea Police Dept. and is not written for outside agencies, i.e., Freeborn County or outside municipalities. Rigg stated he will see what policies are already in place with the Albert Lea Police dept., so it can be noted that they are in place in Albert Lea.

The Law Enforcement Transparency Policy that Corey-Gruenes presented, does include requirements for outside agencies and the recommendation is to establish transparency standards for all law enforcement operations within the city of Albert Lea.

B. Resource Listing – Mental Health Listing and Freeborn County Resource Directory

Resource listing provided by Zelenak and is a resource listing of various support agencies within Freeborn County for any resident to access. Board members reviewed the listing and it was suggested to add the Althing Clinic in the Northbridge Mall/Herberger's location and the Reassurance Program through the AL Fire Department. Zelenak stated he will get the contact person responsible for the resource listing and provide that to Evenson. If there would need to be changes made, then she would be able to send to the County's contact, responsible for updating the resource list.

Rigg added that as a City we shouldn't endorse one firm over another. An example given was in regards to law firms, instead of listing individual firms, it should have Southern MN Legal Services listed. Zelenak asked if there are resources the board would like to see on it, that possibly the County could make those changes.

Corey-Gruenes asked if this would be the listing that would be linked to the HRC information on the City's website and Rigg answered yes. Rigg added that the County and City should use the same resource listing, to make it easier for residents. Hanson asked if this listing was already on the County's website and Zelenak said he would follow up on that.

Boettcher suggested a possible social media page for the Human Rights Commission, noting it could be an outreach to the community. After discussion, Rigg stated the City has certain policies on social media, but it could be noted what events the HRC would be at. These functions would be posted under the HRC's link on the city's website.

Rigg added that if the resource listing provided is accurate, he can add the link to the City's website.

C. Freeborn County Profile and Department of Employment & Economic Development (DEED – Southeast MN Regional Disparities by Race & Origin

Zelenak provided this information to the HRC Board. Both the Freeborn County Economic Indicators as well as the Southeast MN Disparities by Race were put out by the Minnesota Department of Employment & Economic Development (DEED). The graphs and documents show the economic statistics as it relates to income, cost of

living and housing. Also, showing employment characteristics by race in Southeast Minnesota vs. all of Minnesota. This information was provided to commission members for their review as it relates to Human Rights. Zelenak noted it's good background information for the commission to have. There was continued discussion regarding the statistics as it relates to our community and the state.

D. Guest Column in Albert Lea Tribune – tabled from last meeting.

Corey-Gruenes explained he hasn't written a revised version of his article but he urged members to be careful how they frame their opinion of human rights. Noting that as a Human Rights Commission, that human rights should not be framed as Liberal or Conservative. He urged the commission to look at the issues and know if we are a voice for human rights not everyone will be happy. After discussion it was decided to wait on writing a new article. The commission will wait to review the article Olson had intended to write.

Board Member Items:

- **Corey-Gruenes** - asked Boettcher to talk about the article he wrote for the Ahlahasa – Boettcher stated that the column he wrote was about a KKK Chapter that was in Freeborn County and Albert Lea in the 1920's. Boettcher noted that in the article he connected how the anti-immigration sentiment within the clan is similar to what is present today. He explained that racism is still a problem within our society today. Noting that his main message was about this connection and the similarities between then and now. Corey-Gruenes said he'll send the link out for commission members to read the full article. Hanson asked if Boettcher would bring copies of the Ahlahasa to our meetings for members to take. He said there are just a few left to be written, but he will bring them to the meetings.
- Corey-Gruenes thanked everyone that helped promote the Story Show, it was a great night. He appreciated the City's partnership and the TikTok video the City put out to promote it.

Staff Communications:

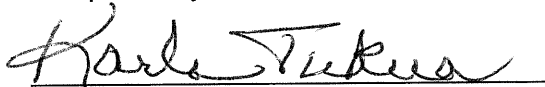
- **Rigg** – Rigg brought up the idea to have members of the HRC help with the Strategic Plan as it relates to the budget process. In this budget process there is discussion as it relates to equity centered fees and tax structure. Rigg added he'd like to have commission members input on what are more equitable ways on capturing revenue and also on spending revenue. The perspective would be on individuals or needs that are overlooked or underfunded and having the HRC input on this. Rigg gave an overview on how the budget team reviews different accounts and gave an example of looking at Utility Rates. How to divide between individuals and commercial, giving additional background on this process.

- Hanson asked how this would work, to which Rigg explained that when the strategic plan team spoke about this in the budgeting process, they looked at it from a social equity standpoint. From a social equity standpoint, it would be good to have the HRC's input. After more discussion on this process, Hanson said that maybe it would be a practice run to understand the process better.
- Hanson asked if there would need to be a vote on this to which Alkula noted that it's more of an idea and until it's brought before them for a vote, there wouldn't be.
- Rigg said rather than having a vote, he asked if members would be open to having an official assignment in helping with the budgeting process. Corey-Gruenes said he thought it was a creative idea and he'd like to be a part of it. Rigg will work on the metrics and after speaking with the consultant, he will bring back to the commission for a vote.

Adjournment: 7:17 p.m.

Motion to adjourn was made by Hanson and seconded by Corey-Gruenes at 7:17pm. On a voice vote, all members present voted in favor of said motion 4-0. Olson, Victorino and Hernandez were absent. Meeting adjourned. Next meeting will be Thursday, April 09, 2026, at 6:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Karla Tukua
Human Rights Commission Secretary

Approved:



Aruna Evenson
Human Rights Commission Vice-Chair