



MEETING OF THE HUMAN RELATIONS COMMITTEE

1/21/2026 - MINUTES

AGENDA

1. Call to Order

The Human Relations Committee met at 4:00 PM on Wednesday, January 21, 2026, in the 4th Floor Mayor's Conference Room, 221 N. 5th St. Committee members present included Katie Houle, Betsy Zarr, Thea Jorgensen, Joan Klein, Chair Sargianna Wutzke, and recently appointed member Denise Fettig-Loftesnes.

2. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

3. Consider Approval of Minutes

Member Jorgensen motioned to approval the minutes as presented. Member Zarr seconded. Upon a roll call vote M/C.

4. Appointed Members to HRC

There was an introduction of newly appointed member Denise Fettig-Loftesnes and reappointed member Thea Jorgensen to the committee.

5. Recap of MLK Event

Chair Wutzke, Members Jorgensen and Houle attended the event. Attending members reported Commissioner Risch gave welcoming remarks and that the event was well organized and well attended.

6. Community Events

A. Community Conversations Forum

1. Presentation at City Commission Meeting

Chair Wutzke and Vice Chair Houle will be presenting to the City Commission, a summary from the last Community Conversation Forum focusing on Homelessness as well as sharing feedback received from those in attendance and from the community regarding the topic.

2. Discussion on Honorariums

The topic of giving honorariums to individuals serving on the panel during the Community Conversation Forums has been discussed for several meetings. Community Integration Facilitator, Heather May noted that she has received a grant that would allow the committee to issue an honorarium to panelist who are refugees and will also be looking for grant opportunities that would allow dollars to be spent as an honorarium for other qualifying classifications as well. Member Fettig-Loftesnes offered other qualifying grants as well and would reach out to Heather May if should identified any. The committee also briefly discussed the potential for private entities to issue a donation for the purpose of issuing an honorarium for those serving as a panelist in the forum discussions. It was noted by City staff that the acceptance of any donation would need to be approved by the City Commission.

3. Discussion of Date and Location of Event

Member Fettig-Loftesnes offered to confirm whether or not the Dream Center would be available and would report back to the committee. Chair Wutzke introduced the idea of engaging students in the Community Conversation Forum through the Empower{Ed} Program through Bismarck Public Schools. Chair Wutzke and Vice Chair Houle will present the idea on January 29th and report back if the idea was selected. The topic of the next Community Conversation Forum will depend on if the pitched idea is selected by the Empower{Ed} program.

7. Humanitarian of the Year Criteria

The Committee discussed ideas for how to develop a more specific scoring criteria for the three humanitarian award categories. A subcommittee consisting of members Jorgensen, Zarr and Fettig-Loftesnes was formed to develop the specific criterias. Administration staff will look into developing individual application forms for each of the humanitarian award categories.

8. Other Business

1) Officer nominations and elections

Chair Wutzke nominated Vice Chair Houle to serve as Chair for 2026. Member Zarr seconded the motion. Upon a vote, M/C.

Member Jorgensen nominated Member Klein to serve as Vice Chair in 2026. Member Zarr seconded the motion. Upon a vote, M/C.

2) Member Klein discussed the upcoming events for the North Dakota Asian American Arts and Culture Initiative. Upcoming events are:

- a) Upcoming "Know My Culture" events for Malaysia, Mongolia and Thailand in February, March and April.
- b) The annual Culural Expo will be in May
- c) There will be a three part Lunar New Year event, February 11, 15 and 19.

ADJOURN

Meeting adjourned 5:00.

