

MISSION

The Ypsilanti Human Relations Commission was created in 1994 by the City Charter and codified by City Council in 1995, to ensure full access to human and civil rights of the people for Ypsilanti. Its nine voting members and two youth members are Ypsilanti residents appointed for three-year and one-year terms respectively, by the Mayor and City Council.

Ypsilanti's Non-Discrimination Ordinance prohibits discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations. No person may be denied their civil or political rights or be discriminated against because of actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, immigration status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, disability status, familial status, educational association, source of income, height or weight. (Ypsilanti Code of Ordinances, Chapter 58, Article III, Division 1, Sec. 58-61)

ARTICLE I – Name

The name of the Commission shall be the Human Relations Commission of The City of Ypsilanti, hereinafter referred to as "Commission."

ARTICLE II – Objectives

The objectives, purposes, powers, and duties of the Commission are those set forth by Article IX, Section II of the City Charter and chapter 58-32 through 58-39 of the City Code of Ordinances.

Section 1. The Commission shall serve as an advisory body to the city council, and shall study problems in the city relating to prejudice and discrimination and make policy recommendations to the City Council to identify and remove discriminatory structures and practices, and act to remediate the legacy of historical oppression.

Section 2. The Commission will pursue the mission and objectives in accordance with all established policies of city council and charter.

Section 3. The Commission as a whole shall be expressive of the diversity of the entire community and will act as a bridge (or coordinating agency) between protected classes in the community and the city, for the development of policies and educational programs which promote empowerment and a socially just community.

Section 4. The Commission shall communicate with federal and state agencies regarding human rights and affirmative action programs for the purpose of making recommendations to City Council.

Section 5. The Commission shall promote mutual understanding and foster equality and respect among all persons, which shall include receiving and reviewing complaints from individuals alleging violations of Ypsilanti's Non-Discrimination Ordinance, and take appropriate action, including but not limited to referral of complaints to appropriate agencies and/or to the City Attorney, mediation of complaints, or dismissal of complaints in accordance with section 58-36 and 58-67 of the City Code.

Section 6. The Commission shall from time-to-time conduct public forums, town hall meetings, educational and other programs to promote the equal rights and opportunities of all persons. This shall include advocating for accountability of City Council for broadbase changes that impacts structural equity.

Section 7. The Commission shall from time-to-time issue public reports and recommendations to the City Council on ways to improve city government programs and ordinances designed to eliminate structural discrimination and/or to address the effects of past discrimination.

ARTICLE III – Membership

Section 1. Membership of the Human Relations Commission shall consist of nine voting members, and two non-voting youth members. Members of the Commission shall be appointed as provided for in Section 9.03 of the City Charter of the City of Ypsilanti.

Section 2. The first priority of each member of the Commission shall be to represent and advocate for equality and social justice in the City of Ypsilanti, putting aside personal or special interests.

Section 3. Membership of the Commission shall be representative of the entire geography and diversity of the City of Ypsilanti.

Section 4. Each member of the Commission shall avoid conflicts of interest, including, but not limited to, deliberating on, voting on, or reviewing a case concerning the member; the immediate family or household of the member; property owned by or adjacent to property owned by the member; or a corporation or partnership in which the member has an ownership, employment, or other financial interest. Each member of the commission shall be bound by Chapter 46, Article III of the Ypsilanti City Code otherwise known as the Ethical Standards of Conduct.

Potential conflicts of interest should be identified by the member prior to deliberation of the case; if the Commission determines that a conflict exists, the member shall remove themselves from the meeting room during deliberation of the case.

Section 5. Members shall avoid *ex parte* contact about cases before the Commission whenever possible. If such contact occurs, the member shall make a report of the discussion to the Commission before the deliberation of the case, as possible.

Once a vote is taken and an issue is decided by vote, the duty of each member of the Commission is to accurately represent the position reflected by the outcome of the vote.

From time-to-time, or on a specific issue, the Commission may appoint a spokesperson for the Commission for all matters which occur outside of the meetings of the Commission. Otherwise, this shall fall to the Chairperson.

Section 6. If any discussion occurs regarding a member or officer performance leading to recommendation for dismissal, such discussion and identification of persons shall occur in closed session to protect privacy. The member or officer must request the closed session.

Section 6.1 To consider the dismissal, suspension, or disciplining of, or to hear complaints or charges brought against, or to consider a periodic personnel evaluation of, a public officer, employee, staff member, or individual agent, if the named person requests a closed hearing. A person requesting a closed hearing may rescind the request at any time, in which case the matter at issue shall be considered after the rescission only in open sessions. (MCL.261)

ARTICLE IV – Officers, and Their Duties

Section 1. The officers of the Commission shall be a Chairperson and a Vice-Chairperson which on the date of their election must have served at least one calendar year on the Commission. Such other officers, sub-committees, etc. as are deemed necessary and advisable for the conduct of business shall be appointed as required and provided for by the Commission.

Section 2. The Chairperson shall preside at all meetings and hearings of the Commission and shall have the duties normally conferred by parliamentary usage on such officers. The Chairperson and City

Clerk (or their designee) shall sign approved minutes of meetings and receive communications and petitions sent to the Human Relations Commission.

Section 3. The Vice-Chairperson shall preside and exercise all of the duties of the Chairperson in their absence. Should neither the Chairperson nor the Vice-Chairperson be present at a meeting, a temporary Chairperson shall be elected by the majority vote of the members present, upon a tie vote, the longest continuously serving member shall act as temporary Chairperson.

Section 4. The Commission may designate a person who is not a member of the Commission to serve as Recording Secretary. The Recording Secretary shall prepare draft minutes for review by the Commission and shall perform such other duties as may be ordered by the Commission.

Section 5. Nomination of officers shall be made from the floor at the annual organizational meeting which shall be the regular meeting in January each year, and the election shall be immediately thereafter. Members may self-nominate or be nominated prior to the meeting where elections will occur, and will be asked to provide a statement of service before a vote shall be taken.

Section 6. A candidate receiving a majority vote of the Commission shall be declared elected and shall serve a term of one year or until their successor shall take the office.

Section 7. Vacancies in office shall be filled immediately by the next scheduled meeting.

Section 8. The officers shall be members of the Commission.

Section 9. The Commission may vacate an officer from their seat by an affirmative two thirds vote of the entire voting membership of the Commission, but only for cause and after notice and the opportunity for a due process hearing on the merits.

ARTICLE V – Meetings

Section 1. All regular and special meetings, hearings, and records shall be open to the public. Meetings shall be conducted under the Open Meetings Act of the State of Michigan.

Section 2. The Commission shall hold a minimum of one meeting each quarter.

Section 3. A special meeting of the Commission may be called by the Chairperson, or the Vice-Chairperson in the event the Chairperson is unavailable, or any three (3) members of the Commission. Each member of the Commission must receive at least two days notice as to the time, place and purpose of the meeting.

Section 4. The normal order of business at meetings shall be as follows:

1. Call to order
2. Roll call
3. Approval of minutes
4. Public Comment
5. Old business
6. New business
7. Public Comment
8. Proposed business for next meeting
9. Commissioner comments
10. Adjournment

Section 5. Audience participation shall be limited to 3 minutes per person, per participation period. The Chairperson may extend the time limit at their discretion.

Section 6. A quorum shall consist of a majority of the current voting Human Relations Commissioners. When all 9 voting Commission seats are not filled, a quorum will be no less than four (4) voting Commissioners.

Section 7. All proceedings, decisions and resolutions of the Commission shall be initiated by motion.

Section 8. An affirmative vote of a majority of those present shall be necessary to pass any motion involving the adoption or amending of policy statements or recommendations to the Council.

Section 9. Voting shall be by voice vote and shall not be recorded as individual ayes or nays unless requested by a member of the Commission, in which case the Chairperson shall order the vote to be so recorded except that any member may abstain by so declaring prior to vote. An abstention may only be made in the case of a conflict of interest; it is otherwise the duty of all Commissioners present to participate in the vote.

Section 10. Parliamentary procedure in Commission meetings shall be governed by Roberts Rules of Order, as amended. The Commission shall establish procedures as it deems necessary.. A copy of Roberts Rules of Order will be available at Human Relations Commission meetings.

Section 11. The City Clerk, City Attorney, and other officials of the City may participate in the Commission's discussion, but shall not vote, introduce motions, be counted towards quorum, or initiate any other parliamentary action.

ARTICLE VI – Disposition and Record

Section 1. The decision of the Commission shall take effect five (5) days from the date of determination. However, the Commission may find the immediate effect of such decision is necessary for the preservation of property or personal rights and shall certify with five (5) concurring votes or a majority vote of the voting members present. The applicant shall be advised of the decision in writing within five (5) days of the final hearing and decision.

Section 2. The Commission shall keep, or cause to be kept, a permanent record of Commission meetings and decisions, which shall, at a minimum, include:

- a. A copy of the meeting posting pursuant to P.A. 267 of 1976, as amended, (being the Michigan Open Meetings Act, M.C.L. 15.261 et seq.)
- b. A copy of the minutes, and all its attachments which shall include a summary of the meeting, in chronological sequence of occurrence
- c. Records of any action, support documents, investigation reports, photographs, and correspondence received, attached as an appendix to the minutes

Section 3. The City Clerk, their designee, or the Chairperson shall communicate the actions and recommendations of the Commission to the City Council and general public.

ARTICLE VII – Committees

Section 1. The Commission or Chair may establish and appoint ad hoc committees for special purposes or issues, as deemed necessary. Less than a quorum may serve on an ad hoc committee at any given time.

Section 2. All committees are subservient to the Commission and report their recommendations to the Commission for review and action. The Commission can overrule any action of any committee.

Section 3. The same principals of these Bylaws for the Commission also apply to all committees of the Commission, including, but not limited to, making all meetings open to the public and keeping a record of all proceedings.

ARTICLE VIII – Commission Absences

Section 1. In order to maintain maximum participation of all appointed Human Relations Commission members at all regularly scheduled meetings of the Ypsilanti Human Relations Commission, the following attendance guide and Commissioner replacement policy for “excused” or “unexcused” absences should be implemented:

a. When appointed, each Commissioner should be aware of the expectation to attend each scheduled monthly meeting of the Human Relations Commission.

b. In the event of unplanned personal matters, business trips, family vacation trips, changed job requirements, sickness, religious practice, weather, or other physical disabilities that prohibit the Commissioner from attending the scheduled monthly meeting; the Commissioner shall notify the Clerk’s Office at City Hall or the Human Relations Commission Chairperson as early as possible, or at least an hour prior of their inability to attend the scheduled meeting. The Human Relations Commission member upon this notification will receive an “excused absence” for the involved scheduled meeting.[SJ2] During meeting roll call, professional staff at City Hall or the Human Relations Commission Chairperson shall make note of the excused absence.

c. There will be a limit of three (3) consecutive “excused absences” or two (2) consecutive “unexcused absences” for any member of the Human Relations Commission. If any member meets the above criteria for consecutive yearly scheduled regular meetings, the Commissioner will be asked to provide cause and recommended for dismissal unless extenuating circumstances exist.

d. The “recommended for dismissal” action will be initiated by City Clerk’s office staff and forwarded on to the City Council for official action. The Commissioner should be replaced as soon as possible by the Mayor and City Council in order to maintain the prescribed number of Human Relations Commission members. The Chairperson of the Commission shall work with the Mayor and City Council to locate appropriate individuals to fill any vacancies.

ARTICLE IX – Miscellaneous

Section 1. These Rules and Regulations may be amended or altered during a regular meeting by the affirmative vote of at least two thirds of the current voting roster of the Commission, provided notice of the proposed bylaw change is given to all members by announcement at a preceding meeting, and the notice be included in the minutes of the meeting, said meeting to occur not less than 15 days prior.

Section 2. The provisions of these Rules and Regulations shall be discussed and/or adopted or readopted by the Commission annually at their regular January meeting.

Section 3. The Commission shall during the November regular meeting construct proposed Commission priorities for the next calendar year and provide City Council with an annual report. This report shall include discussion of the Commission’s activities, the status of any on-going investigations, the status of any concluded investigations, the proposed Commission priorities and any recommendations to Council for the coming year, along with any fiscal needs anticipated. This report shall be prepared and submitted to City Council on or before December 31st.