

Ann Arbor Human Rights Commission

Annual Report for 2016¹

The *Duties* of the Ann Arbor Human Rights Commission (HRC), as they appear in the City's Code of Ordinances, require that the Commission report to City Council annually on two of its functions: taking complaints of alleged violations of Chapter 112 Non-Discrimination and monitoring compliance by City contractors with the provisions of that ordinance. This report provides this required information along with a broader summary of the HRC's activity in 2016. A separate report focused on contractor compliance was submitted to Council in early April and is also described briefly below.

Commission Administration

The Human Rights Commission lost three very active, long-term Commissioners in 2016, but then gained four new appointees who are proving to be excellent contributors. In addition, Graydon Krapohl joined Sumi Kailasapathy this year as Council liaisons to the Commission. With full, but relatively new, membership, this Commission was able to achieve a great deal in 2016. We began with administrative improvements. We revised the HRC bylaws and defined conflict-of-interest safeguards more clearly. Those changes will better enable us to handle the additional responsibilities established by the passage of the City's Non-Discrimination Ordinance (NDO). To enhance the Commission's ability to reach out to the community, we upgraded our webpage, created business cards, and improved our social media presence via the City's Facebook page and Twitter account with the assistance of City Communications Director Lisa Wondrash. We are also working on better ways to educate the public about their rights under the NDO and the services the HRC provides.

Support for Human Rights

The Human Rights Commission tracks human-rights-related issues and concerns in the community and identifies ways in which we can contribute most effectively.

This year, the HRC supported:

- the adoption of the Michigan State Board of Education's excellent document entitled ***Guidance on Safe and Supportive Learning Environments for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) Students***;
- the Human Rights Campaign's request for information to complete its ***Municipal Quality Index***. Their survey examines how inclusive municipal laws, policies, and services are for LGBT people and provides an increasingly-accepted metric for evaluating whether a particular city is a desirable place to live, visit, attend school, locate a business, etc., for anyone who values openness and inclusiveness. Completing this survey accurately had not received the attention we felt it deserved in the past, and this year, with the City's Human Resources Department collecting most of the information and the HRC providing the rest, the City received its well-deserved Index rating of "100", which is the highest score possible;
- the receipt by Council of the HRC's November 4, 2015 report entitled ***Civilian Police Review: Recommendations for Strengthening Police-Community Relations in Ann Arbor***.

¹ This report was unanimously accepted by the members of the Human Rights Commission on April 12, 2017

In conjunction with the receipt of our report, the HRC spoke to individual City Council members and to City Council as a whole, passed resolutions, explained the report to community members, answered questions, and sought funding for the implementation of its recommendations;

- the implementation of the civilian police review report recommendations by continuing to educate ourselves on the issues raised in our report and other issues likely to be important in finding optimal solutions; and
- the selection of a consulting firm to provide the City with an independent analysis of AAPD community engagement practices. The HRC worked with the City Administrator to clearly and accurately define the scope of work required and participated in the selection process.

Facilitation of Contractor Compliance Under Chapter 112: Non-Discrimination

An HRC subcommittee considered how the Commission could meet its obligations to monitor contractor compliance as required under the NDO in a way that would facilitate compliance and enforcement, without over-regulating the process of doing business with the City. Working closely with the City's procurement and legal offices, we developed a plan, the first phase of which was implemented in 2016. Goals for reaching the next phase of the plan have been set for 2017. A separate report, jointly prepared by the Human Rights Commission and Colin Spencer, Purchasing Manager, was submitted to City Council for its approval at its April 3, 2017 meeting (pursuant to section 9:158 of the Ann Arbor Non-Discrimination Ordinance).

Handling Complaints Under the Non-Discrimination Ordinance

Under the revised Non-Discrimination Ordinance, the Commission is tasked with receiving and responding to complaints of alleged violations of the NDO. At the beginning of the year, we refined the policies and procedures we use to address complaints, based on our experience in 2015. Although the complaint-handling function of the HRC has still not been widely publicized, we are taking steps to improve that in 2017. A spreadsheet summarizing the complaints received in 2016 is attached. In addition to these complaints, the HRC receives calls and answers questions about human rights and discrimination in Ann Arbor. We did not track requests for information in 2016.

Broadening Community Response

Although no meetings of the Ann Arbor Community Response Group (CRG)² were held in 2016, many of the group's functions were still active. A representative of the CRG (the HRC chairperson) continued to meet regularly with the Chief of Police about policing and community engagement issues and monitor any illegal (or concerning) activity based on bias or hate. The CRG also continued to be involved with county, regional, and state groups working on these issues. Importantly, the HRC receives communications from members of the community throughout the year that helps us identify issues that concern them. In 2016, these most often involved issues related to police practices and the need for civilian police review. In the last

² The Community Response Group, whose members represent many sectors of the community, including area law enforcement, education, advocacy, faith, and so on, was formed in 2010 and is coordinated by the HRC. The CRG's mission is to reach out to the community and respond to any tensions that arise involving bias, hate, and/or human rights issues.

quarter of the year, the HRC also heard more concerns about the safety of minorities and immigrants in our community, including their need for reassurance and support.