



Administration Department

DATE: April 9, 2024

FROM: Jason Tomanek, City Administrator

ITEM: Human Relations Committee Annual Report

REQUEST:

Receive the annual report from the City of Bismarck Human Relations Committee.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The purpose of the Bismarck Human Relations Committee (HRC) is to create an atmosphere of inclusion, equality, and accessibility through education and outreach to recognize the value of a diverse community. The HRC has been actively working to increase awareness of its mission and to partner with similar organizations in the community. The 2023 Annual Report demonstrates the intentional efforts and positive returns of this volunteer-led advisory board.

RECOMMENDED CITY COMMISSION ACTION:

Receive the 2023 Human Relations Committee Annual Report.

STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION:

Whitnie Olsen, Senior Administrative Assistant, wolsen@bismarcknd.gov

ATTACHMENTS:

1. 2023 Human Relations Committee Annual Report

**Bismarck Human Relations
Committee Annual Report**



January 2023-December 2023

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MISSION OF COMMITTEE

The mission of the Bismarck Human Relations Committee is to create an atmosphere of inclusion, equality and accessibility through education and outreach to recognize the value of a diverse community.

GOALS OF COMMITTEE

The Bismarck Human Relations Committee has the following goals and objectives as defined in its strategic plan:

- 1. To exhibit leadership in the areas of civil and human rights:**
 - a.** The committee will be comprised of individuals that represent and are knowledgeable of diverse populations.
 - b.** The committee members will practice and model actions that exemplify nondiscrimination, acceptance and respect of diversity.
- 2. To educate the public about civil and human rights:**
 - a.** The committee will implement a public education plan to identify and address issues.
 - b.** The committee will actively plan, sponsor and participate in events that promote and celebrate diversity.
- 3. To identify issues of principal concern in the area of civil and human rights:**
 - a.** The committee will provide access for public input.
 - b.** The committee will prioritize issues based on input received.
- 4. To recommend priorities and objectives about issues of community concern to the City Commission:**
 - a.** The committee will serve as a liaison in issues of civil and human rights between the community and the City Commissioners.
- 5. To advocate for compliance with federal and state laws regarding civil and human rights, including North Dakota Century Code Chapters 14-02.4 (Human Rights) and 14-02.5 (Housing):**
 - a.** The committee will provide information about current laws through multiple formats.
 - b.** The committee will maintain data regarding civil and human rights issues.

ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMITTEE

Bismarck Ordinance 5208 created the Bismarck Human Relations Committee and received final passage on October 8th, 2002. The committee's purpose is to promote acceptance and respect for diversity through educational programs and activities and to discourage all forms of discrimination including protected class discrimination, ADA violations or other statutory or constitutional violations (Chapter 2-11).

APPOINTMENT TO COMMITTEE

The committee consists of nine members who serve without pay. Member appointment is by the President of the Board of City Commissioners and is subject to confirmation by the Board of City Commissioners. Appointees serve three-year terms.

COMMITTEE MEETING TIMES AND LOCATION

The Bismarck Human Relations Committee meets on the third Monday of each month (except on holidays) at 5:15 p.m. in the 4th Floor Mayor's Conference Room of the City/County Office Building, 221 North 5th Street in downtown Bismarck. Meetings are open to the public and accept public comment.

2023 COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Chair – Jason Grueneich
- Vice Chair – Thea Jorgensen
- Geraldine Ambe
- Darcy Andahl
- Nicole Ralph
- Sashay Schettler
- Sargianna Wutzke
- Carl Young
- Gabrielle Abouassaly

PUBLICATIONS AND OTHER INFORMATION

A copy of the Human Relations Committee Ordinance, Strategic Plan, Annual Report, complaint filing forms and other information may be accessed online at www.bismarcknd.gov or by mailing:

Bismarck Human Relations Committee
City of Bismarck
PO Box 5503
221 N 5th Street Bismarck,
ND 58506-5503
www.bismarcknd.gov



Humanitarian of the Year Awards

Sister Kathleen Atkinson

Sister Kathleen Atkinson is a nun from the Benedictine Sister of Annunciation Monastery, an author, and the founder of Ministry on the Margins (an organization that helps those struggling with transitions in their lives, including after prison terms and periods of homelessness). She was nominated for the award by Krista Rauch, who made the following statement regarding her efforts to help the people of Bismarck:

“Through her work, Sr. Kathleen does what many people cannot or will not do – she looks beyond the sins of the past to help convicted felons and people as they recover and/or re-enter society, connecting them to crucial resources and helping them find meaningful employment,” said Rauch in her nomination. “She has sat with them in difficult times and celebrated alongside them in times of triumph. In addition to selflessly serving a population in need, she has influenced many to step up and make a difference in our community.”



The Dream Center

The Dream Center Bismarck opened in June 2019 and helps approximately 1,000 households within our area receive the food they need. In total, the center provides 750 breakfasts, 1,100 sack lunches, and 1,800 banquet meals to the community. The Dream Center was nominated to win the Humanitarian Award by Rhonda Styles-Rohde — who included the following explanation in her submission.

“The Dream Center is such a blessing to our community and it, plus its founders (Jim and Cindy Barnhart), should be recognized. Food is the focus, but their hope is that a person will take in other services provided by partnering entities. Dream Center Bismarck is a non-profit organization whose main goal is to bring ‘Help for Today. Hope for Tomorrow’.”



[Martin Luther King JR Day
Celebration](#)

This event celebrated the dream and legacy of Martin Luther King Jr during a celebration held at Trinity Lutheran Church. The committee was one of the sponsors of the event and assisted with the event by promoting it, assisting with the set-up of the event, and having a booth at the event where committee members visited with attendees about the committee.



Families Around the World

The Bismarck Human Relations Committee had a booth at the Families Around the World Event which was held at the Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library. This event celebrated diversity in Bismarck. At our booth, we offered the activity of rock painting. We talked to attendees about our mission of inclusion and diversity in our community and what we are doing to support this mission.



Capital Pride

The Bismarck Human Relations Committee participated in the Capital Pride Event at the Bismarck State College Energy Center. This event is an annual, family-oriented summer event that celebrates the LGBTQIA2S+ community. During the Capital Pride event, the Bismarck Human Relations Committee had a booth and shared information on the mission and purpose of the committee which includes the importance of inclusion and diversity. Committee members had a great time talking with the people attending the event and sharing our mission along with handing out SWAG items and brochures detailing our mission.



Considering Mathew Shepherd

The Bismarck Human Relations Committee was one of the sponsors of the Considering Matthew Sheperd Event that occurred on the anniversary of the death of Matthew Shepherd. This event was a concert musical that commemorated the 25th anniversary of the kidnapping and murder of Matthew Shepherd. The Bismarck Human Relations Committee had a booth at the event where they shared about the mission of the committee and how people can get involved.



[These are Your Neighbors Podcast](#)

These are your Neighbors is a podcast hosted by Human Relations Committee Members, Thea Jorgensen and Sargianna Wutzke that began taping in January 2023. Through conversations with diverse change makers in the community, the podcast hopes to strengthen inclusivity amongst the Bismarck community, by encouraging others to get to know their neighbors. The podcast is taped at Dakota Media Access and airs on 102.5 on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays at 10 am as well as on all major streaming platforms. Some of the change makers featured in 2023 include BHRC members Jason Grueneich and Sashay Schettler, Bill Patrie, Jasmine Tosseth-Smith, Commissioner Anne Cleary, Sister Kathleen Atkinson, Erin Oban, Stacy Shaffer, and Nancy Guy.



Exciting things coming in 2024

Humanitarian of the Year

The committee will name an individual and a business/non-profit Humanitarian of the Year. This award will be given to an individual and a group that exhibited leadership in the area of human rights. The award focuses on recognizing persons in the community that educate, identify, protect, and promote acceptance and respect for diversity, and discourage discrimination.

Quarterly Community Events

The Bismarck Human Relations Committee continues to plan to participate in at least four events a year in our community as well as plan at least one event as a committee. We are very excited to discuss our mission of inclusion, equality and accessibility through education and outreach to recognize the value of a diverse community.

Community Conversations Forum

The City of Bismarck's Human Relations Committee Community Conversations Forum is an opportunity to facilitate important conversations about the adversities that many of our neighbors face, here in Bismarck. A panel of subject matter experts will address various issues in the community, with the hopes of building an ongoing conversation with the City Commission, as well as other community organizations and members.





