

PAPERS IN COMMITTEE

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Adjournment



Medford City Council
Medford, Massachusetts

MEETING DATE

April 2, 2025

SPONSORED BY

Justin Tseng, City Councilor

AGENDA ITEM

24-069 - Resolution to Discuss a Modernization of the Human Rights Commission's Enabling Ordinance

FULL TEXT AND DESCRIPTION

Be it Resolved that the Committee on Resident Services and Public Engagement meet to discuss a modernization of the Human Rights Commission's enabling ordinance and invite current and former commissioners to provide input.

RECOMMENDATION

FISCAL IMPACT

ATTACHMENTS

- I. HRC Ordinance Update Feb 27-2

DIVISION 2. HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION¹

Sec. 50-61. Establishment and Purpose

The purposes of this division are:

- (1) To define the purpose of the Medford Human Rights Commission (MHRC or “the Commission”) as protecting and promoting the human rights and civil rights of all persons in the City of Medford; and
- (2) To define the composition, powers, and scope of responsibility of the MHRC.
- (3) To establish a policy to uphold the human rights of all persons in the City of Medford, including the free exercise and enjoyment of any rights and privileges secured by the Constitution and laws of the United States and the Constitution and laws of the Commonwealth. This policy shall provide equal opportunity to each person regardless of race, color, religious creed, national origin, citizenship, immigration status, sex, age, genetic information, disability, ancestry, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, veteran status, gender identity, gender expression, or status as a person who is a recipient of federal, state or local housing subsidies. This policy shall be enforced where unlawful discrimination exists in housing, employment, education, public accommodations, housing accommodations, within the meaning of M.G.L. Chapter 151B (the Massachusetts Anti-Discrimination Law) and [42](#) U.S.C. §3601, et. seq. (the Federal Fair Housing Act, as amended) or related services and facilities.
- (4) Where previous discriminatory practice or usage tends, on grounds set forth in paragraph (3) of this section, to exclude individuals from participation in, to deny them the benefits of, or to subject them to discrimination under any program or activity to which this policy applies, the city recognizes its obligation to take reasonable affirmative action to remove or overcome the consequences of the any prior discriminatory practice or usage, to accomplish the purposes of this policy. Even in the absence of such prior discrimination, the city shall, in administering any of its programs, take affirmative action to overcome the effects or conditions that have resulted in limiting participation by persons based on the grounds set forth in paragraph (2) of this section.

Membership; appointment; term; removal; organization.

- (a) The Medford Human Rights Commission shall consist of a minimum of nine and may have up to fifteen members who reside in the city. Appointments should be made in accordance with the purpose stated in Sec. 50-61. Three members shall be appointed by the Mayor, and three members shall be appointed by the City Council. The MHRC will appoint a resident from the Medford Housing Authority, and it shall appoint the balance of the members from or upon recommendation from other appropriate City commissions and community-based organizations, such as but not limited to the Disabilities Commission and the Council on Aging.
- (b) The Commission shall reflect the diversity of the City of Medford, and appointments shall be made to ensure that no more than sixty percent of membership are of any one gender or racial identity; and represents the religious, socioeconomic, cultural, and immigrant diversity of Medford's residents.
- (c) All commissioners shall be appointed for a term of three years. Members may serve up to two consecutive terms and are not prohibited from serving additional terms provided they take a year off from serving. However, the initial appointments to the Commission shall serve for the following terms:

¹Editor's note(s)—Ord. No. 795, adopted Dec. 16, 2014, repealed former Div. 2, §§ 50-61—50-63, in its entirety which pertained to fair housing and derived from Ord. No. 496, §§ I—III, adopted March 25, 1986.

- (i) A third of members shall serve for a one-year term.
- (ii) A third of members shall serve for a two-year term.
- (iii) A third of members shall serve for a three-year term.
- (d) A vacancy occurring other than by expiration of a term shall be filled for the unexpired term in the same manner as the original appointment as defined by item (a) above.
- (e) All members of the Commission shall receive compensation of \$1250 each year. In addition, reasonable per diem and necessary expense reimbursement to MHRC commissioners and volunteers shall be paid out of the budget of the Commission.
- (f) MHRC members may be removed only for cause by a 2/3 vote of the Commission, including for unexcused absences that exceed 25 percent of the number of meetings of the committee held within a 12-month period.
- (g) All MHRC members shall receive training on the purpose and obligations of the MHRC as stated in Sec. 50-61, meeting operations, parliamentary procedures, and legal obligations.

Officers.

- (a) The Commission shall elect officers at the start of a new term. Officers shall consist of the chair, vice-chair, and clerk. Officers may be elected to serve for one additional consecutive term. The Commission may also adopt procedural rules and regulations, and establish any subcommittees it deems appropriate. Those appointed by the MHRC to serve on MHRC subcommittees need not be MHRC members.
- (b) The Chair shall preside at all meetings of the MHRC, regulate its proceedings and shall decide all questions of order. The MHRC may question the ruling of the Chair and vote to overrule their ruling. The Chair shall have the same powers to vote upon all measures coming before the city council as any other member of the MHRC.
- (c) The Chair shall set meeting agendas in consultation with the Vice Chair and the assigned City staff person.
- (d) The Chair shall organize a meeting at the start of the term to set goals for the MHRC in line with the purposes and obligations as stated in Sec. 50-61.
- (e) The Vice Chair shall support the Chair in the performance of the Chair's duties and shall assume these duties in the Chair's absence.
- (f) The Clerk shall record or delegate the recording of minutes of MHRC meetings and work to make minutes other than from Executive Sessions available to the public in a timely fashion.
- (g) The Officers shall work jointly to oversee financial procedures; prepare and implement a responsible budget; keep and preserve accurate financial records; and ensure timely payment of financial obligations.
- (h) The Commission shall fill vacancies of officer positions as soon as possible. The Vice-Chair shall assume the responsibilities of the Chair if the chair is vacant until a new Chair is elected.

Meetings; Quorum.

- (a) The commission shall schedule at least eight meetings per year at regular intervals. The chair may call additional meetings as needed to carry out the Commission's responsibilities.
- (b) A majority of sitting members shall constitute a quorum.

Independence; Resources; Counsel.

- (a) The City Solicitor shall serve as counsel of the commission. The commission should have adequate access to counsel.
- (b) The Mayor shall assign a qualified City employee to provide staffing support to the Commission. This person will ensure legal postings of meetings, carry out administrative and program tasks in support of decisions made by the Commission, organize training for members, facilitate the availability of necessary office and other resources to the Commission, and act as a liaison between the Commission and the Mayor.
- (c) The MHRC shall have a budget line in the City's annual budget, which shall be funded at a level adequate for the Commission to perform its duties.
- (d) The MHRC shall prepare and submit a proposed budget to the mayor to assist the commission in accomplishing its purpose herein.

Roles, Powers, and Duties.

The MHRC shall have four major essential roles in its efforts to protect and promote human rights in Medford:

- (a) Community Education/Engagement - The MHRC shall educate the community and engage residents in defending and promoting human rights in Medford, utilizing such tools as public forums, training, and community conversations.
- (b) Advisor to the City of Medford - The MHRC shall assist and advise the City administration and the public school system on matters pertaining to the human rights of City residents and employees. To this end, the Commission will, at the minimum:
 - (i) Review and discuss human rights problem issues with the City administration and other City bodies, and make recommendations necessary to protect the human rights of all City residents and employees.
 - (ii) Request periodic reports quarterly from the Office of Equity and Inclusion regarding data on human rights complaints in the City.
 - (iii) Request periodic annual reports from the City administration detailing employment diversity efforts and employees' self-reported race/ethnicity, disability status, gender identity, age, and length of employment, broken down by municipal departments.
 - (iv) Request that the City administration and/or City Council collect demographic data needed for the MHRC to conduct its duties with tables or maps from available sources, showing, but not limited to, the following:
 - a. Population by age
 - b. City neighborhoods with median age
 - c. Population by race/ethnicity
 - d. Neighborhoods by race/ethnicity
 - e. Traffic stops by race/ethnicity
 - f. Profile of public school students
 - g. Voting Wards/Precincts
 - h. An analysis of access to public transportation by neighborhood
- (c) Policy Advocacy - The MHRC shall be empowered to advocate for laws, policies, and practices that support human rights and improve social equity in Medford, and at the state and federal levels. Advocacy should address not only traditional forms of discrimination but also the cultural and systemic issues that put

segments of our community at a disadvantage, even at risk. The MHRC shall also be empowered to evaluate with a human rights lens and exert its moral authority on the full range of laws, practices, and policies that might have an impact on human rights in Medford and beyond.

- (d) Research and Reporting - In order to have reliable and up-to-date data on human rights issues, the MHRC should gather information from city, state, and other sources, and compile, analyze, synthesize, and disseminate to the community in the form of annual reports.
 - (i) Data on human rights complaints filed with the City and their disposition
 - (ii) Educational data such as school discipline rates and dropout rates and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) metrics on IEPs
 - (iii) Data on police stops
 - (iv) Data on the percentage of affordable housing
 - (v) Data regarding City hiring

While the MHRC is not herein given enforcement powers per se, it may at its discretion review human rights cases brought to its attention, evaluate them, and refer them to the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, Massachusetts Attorney General's Office, or other appropriate bodies as needed.

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Note from Councilor Tseng: This latest draft was edited with input from Director Nwajei, community advocates, current and former members of the Human Rights Commission. I also circulated this draft to other members of the City administration.



Medford City Council
Medford, Massachusetts

MEETING DATE

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SPONSORED BY

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AGENDA ITEM

25-041 - Resolution for Public Engagement Plan for FY26 Budget

FULL TEXT AND DESCRIPTION

Be it Resolved that the Resident Services and Public Engagement Committee design and implement a public engagement plan for the upcoming FY2026 budget.

RECOMMENDATION

FISCAL IMPACT

ATTACHMENTS

None