

HUMAN RIGHTS TASK FORCE REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

The Human Rights Task Force gathered for the last meeting on September 13, 2012 to finalize the discussion and draft a recommendation to the City Council on the appropriate vehicle for addressing and/or promoting human rights in Golden Valley. The following were identified as the core areas of responsibilities where opportunities exist for promoting human rights.



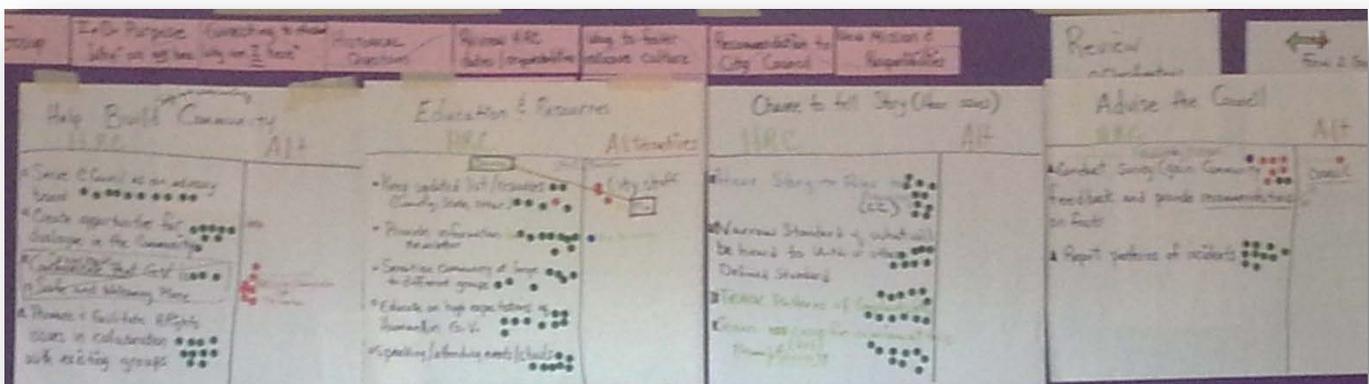
The “dots” exercise of identifying which responsibilities in each area would be best handled through a Human Rights Commission (HRC) vs. an alternative solution, lead to the following conclusions:

- ❖ The HRC is an appropriate vehicle to address and promote human rights in Golden Valley
- ❖ The HRC’s expectations and responsibilities should be clearly identified (see recommendations included)
- ❖ The HRC’s activities should be pro-active in nature, but have the capacity to react appropriately when the situation calls for action (advise the Council or hear grievances)
- ❖ The HRC should refer the victims of human rights violations to appropriate agencies
- ❖ The HRC members should undergo appropriate training (and keep current) in order to provide safe and welcoming environment for those who are seeking assistance
- ❖ The HRC and City Council should be respectful of each other’s work, recognize authority limits, and maintain open and transparent communication with each other and the public
- ❖ The HRC members should maintain neutrality, remain non-political, and focus on broader issues

MISSION of GOLDEN VALLEY Human Rights Commission is to help promote and nourish a safe, respectful, and welcoming community.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **The Task Force Recommends keeping the Human Rights Commission active in the City of Golden Valley**
2. **The Responsibilities** of the HRC should be included in the following core areas :
 - a. Help Build Community
 - i. Create opportunities for dialogue in the community
 - ii. Promote and facilitate human rights issues in collaboration with existing groups
 - b. Seek Opportunities for Education and Resources
 - i. Provide information in the existing city news letter
 - ii. Sensitize community at large to different groups
 - iii. Educate on high expectations of human rights in Golden Valley
 - iv. Speaking, attending events, visiting schools, and conducting seminars
 - c. Provide a Forum for Community Members to Share Grievances
 - i. Hear a story and refer to the proper agency for resolution
 - ii. Use the standard of what will be adhered to in conjunction with the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights or other defined standards
 - iii. Track patterns of complaints
 - iv. Screen cases for advisement to City Council (vet)
 - d. Advise the City Council on Human Rights Issues
 - i. Report patterns of incidents
 - ii. Serve the City Council as an advisory board
3. **Alternative Solutions:** additional ways and/or responsibilities for addressing or promoting human rights were identified, but referred to an alternative solution, not involving the Human Rights Commission directly. Those ideas include:
 - a. Conducting a community survey to gain feedback and provide recommendations on facts
 - *this function would be best performed by the City Council and staff, however the HRC may contribute to the design of the survey to include evaluation of human rights violations, if directed by the Council*
 - b. Communicate that Golden Valley is a safe and welcoming place
 - *this is considered to be a marketing effort and would be best served by the City staff*
 - c. Keep updated list of resources (County, State, other)
 - *This function could be served by the HRC, however the City staff was viewed as an alternative solution that would perhaps be better suited for consistency and accuracy in performing this task*



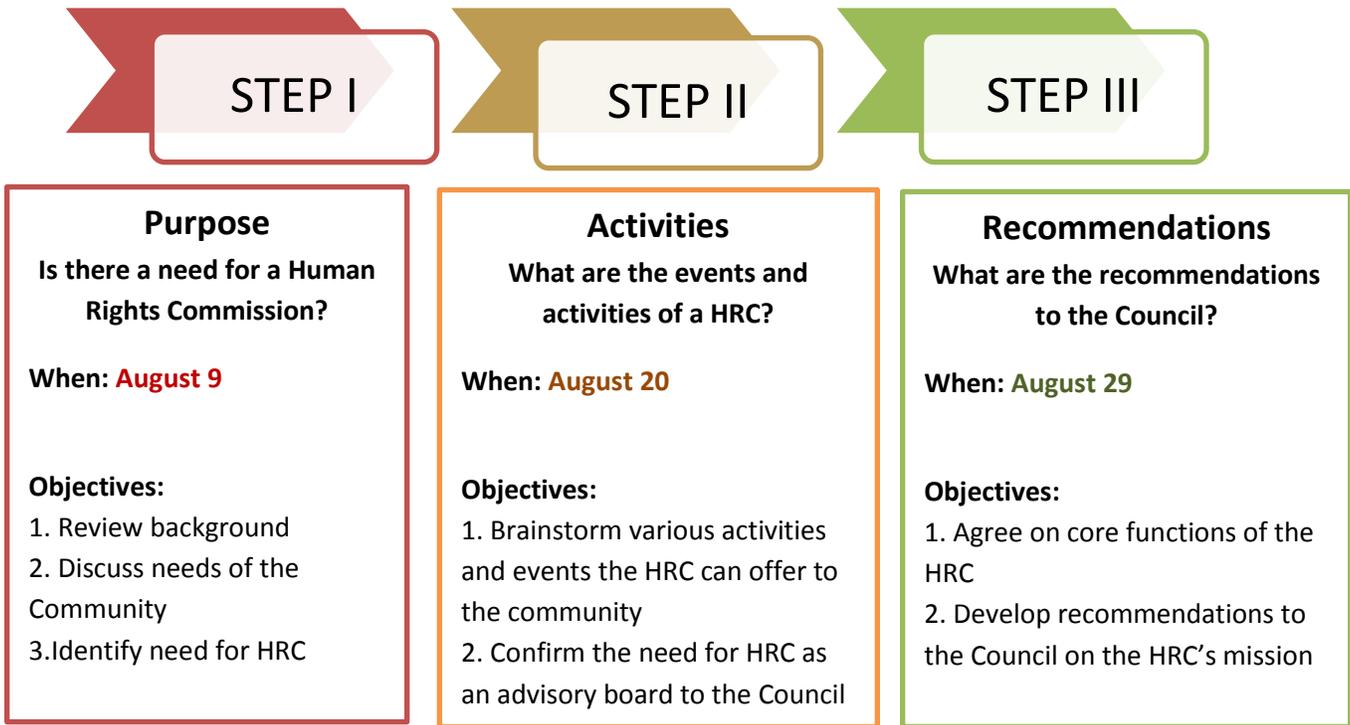
- 4. HRC Member Expectations:** the Task Force recommends that the Human Rights Commission members are held accountable through a clear set of expectations, that should include:
- a. Attendance
 - b. Transparency
 - c. Regular, announced meetings
 - d. Responsible to the City Council
 - e. Non-political
 - f. Maintain open lines of communication
 - g. Understand limits of authority
 - h. Undergo training – keep current
 - i. Be respectful of City Council
 - j. Take timely action
 - k. Respectful of public
 - l. Broad spectrum of focus, include all groups
- 5. Issues for resolution:** prior to moving ahead, the Task Force recommends that the Council resolve the following issues:
- a. Police/HRC Coordination: while the Task Force members understand and appreciate the value and importance of the Police Chief being a liaison to the HRC, there is a strong sense that the primary contact for the HRC should be designated as someone/department other than the Police Department
 - b. Council respectful of HRC work: the Council should be able to treat the Commission’s work and members respectfully
 - c. Have working session once a year with the City Council
- 6. Mission:** the proposed mission for the HRC is to “Help Promote and Nourish a Safe, Respectful, and Welcoming Community.”

The Attachments A, B, C, D, & E provide an overview of the process and discussions in greater detail. Be advised, there were different participants at each session, which created an unusual dynamic and need for bringing up to speed those who were not part of the discussions at the previous sessions. The recommendations provided in this report are agreed upon by the eleven Task Force members who attended the session on September 13 (see front page picture). In response to the facilitators’ request for comments and feedback on the final report, absent members provided **additional** thoughts that are represented in Attachment E. These ideas were not consented by the entire group, therefore included as Attachment E for fair representation of broad views and opinions in regard to the role and responsibilities of the Human Rights Commission.

ATTACHMENT A: Overview of the assignment and process

According to City Code, the HRC advises and recommends to the Council in matters of equal opportunity and elimination of unfair discriminatory practices (City of Golden Valley official website). The Golden Valley City Council is soliciting feedback from residents on the need for a Human Rights Commission as an advisory body to the City Council.

The purpose of the task force is to assess the need for and scope of a Human Rights Commission as an advisory board of the Golden Valley City Council.



Expectations:

- Each meeting will be 3 hours (6–9 pm)
- Review and build on the work of a previous session
- Each participant is valued and appreciated
- Facilitator will be available throughout the process to answer questions or provide explanations

Homework:

Please review prior to the first session: 1) City Code as it pertains to the HRC (advisory board roles and expectations); 2) Golden Valley HRC Bylaws; 3) Universal Declaration of Human Rights; 4) Golden Valley Police Department Bias Crimes Policy.

August 9, 2012
Summary
STEP I

- Introductions and Background Review
- Most Important Functions of the HRC

AGENDA:

1. Introductions
2. Process Review
3. Expectations, Guidelines and Roles
4. Focus Question:
Is there a need for a HRC?

Facilitators: Richard Fursman and Irina Fursman

Expectations: as facilitators we will assist the group with focusing the discussion on the topic, provide the environment for productive and effective thinking, encourage participation, create opportunities for learning, and will strive towards consensus.

Task Force Members Present: Denise Mazone, Alicia Kopp, Mickey Greenberg, Dwayne King, Scott Charlesworth-Seiler, Michael Meyer, Bernie Milstein, Christopher Jordan, Bill Devins, Steve Schultz, Jeffrey Prottas, Hilmer Erickson, Peggy Leppik, Sharon Soike

Expectations: respect each other’s views, contribute, but not dominate conversations, be on time, actively participate, do not litigate past issues, think future HRC, and provide substantive ideas.

WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT FUNCTIONS OF A HRC?

Address and Bring to Light Discrimination	Outreach and Education of Public	Assess Needs and Inventory Services	Advise and Educate Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure the mechanism to address incidents of discrimination continues - Problem identification and remediation - Bring light to unfair practices - A place for the public to take grievances or concerns involving discrimination for resolution - Acknowledge and react on discrimination - Provide protected class an “entry” (info & advocacy) on issues related to civil rights (i.e. discrimination committee) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Plan activities for G.V. constituents to avoid and mitigate civil rights conflicts (advise, educate, resolve, enforce) - Facilitate educating the community - Educate community - Educate the public on matters of human rights - Outreach to community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Survey the community on civil and human rights practices in G.V. - City services (including HRC Commission) reflect the demographics of G.V. and their needs (needs assessment) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Educate Council - Advisory group and sounding board for City Council on policies affecting human rights - Advise Council

August 20, 2012

Summary

STEP II

- Check-in & Review
- Response to Human Rights issues & Opportunities to Promote Human Rights in Golden Valley

HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES IN GOLDEN VALLEY

AGENDA:

1. Check-in
2. Review
3. Community needs and opportunities for HRC response or contribution
4. Confirm HRC need and/or role

Profiling

Race

- HRC Role: Hear complaint, assist person with resources, refer to another agency
- Alternative to HRC: Police Department Internal investigation, City and City Council

School Discrimination

Inequality in education

- HRC Role: support value of diversity in schools, leverage relationship with the City
- Alternative to HRC: School Board, Educational Office, PTA/PTO, State Department

Employment Discrimination

Age

- HRC Role: Direct to attorney or other resources
- Alternative to HRC: Attorney, Mediation, State

Unfair Service Delivery

Disability

WHERE DO OPPORTUNITIES EXIST TO PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS?

<i>Chance to tell story</i>	<i>Education Resources</i>	<i>Events: Create Community</i>	<i>Advise the Council</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comfortable place to air grievances - Process in place to address grievances - Stand ready to hear and defend human rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share ideas and resources with other HRCs (other communities) - Opportunity to work with neighboring agencies - Opportunities: duplicates state/county agencies - Share ideas with HRC network - Access to many schools and school systems - In the absence of human rights responses --- a body should be working to educate on human rights issues - Educate on high expectations of Golden Valley to protect and defend human rights - Educational opportunities - Educate about laws and constitutional amendments - Draw public attention to human rights issues - Bring awareness to recognize signs of abuse and provide guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emphasize building community through events - We have diversity to celebrate - Sponsor community events to bring the diverse community together (serve as planning body) - Organize human rights public education programs and events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resource for City Council to hear, screen and make recommendations - Review and recommend City human rights policies upon request - Protect the City - A body to inform and advise City leaders in an objective non-partisan fashion

Conclusion: After a careful individual review and group discussions, members of the Task Force shared their positions on the need for the existence of a Human Rights Commission in Golden Valley. Several members expressed a point of view that a city Human Rights Commission is redundant as other county and state agencies exist to address the same issues. Majority strongly believe in the value that the Human Rights Commission can bring to the community and that it is necessary to maintain the Commission. The group will reconvene for Session III with an assumption that there is a need for a Human Rights Commission in Golden Valley, Address the mission and responsibilities of the Human Rights Commission and draft the recommendations to the City Council. There might be another meeting or two scheduled to complete this assignment.

August 29, 2012
 Summary
 STEP III

- Check-in & Review
- Responsibilities for addressing human rights

Agenda:

1. Check-in & Review
2. Define Responsibilities
3. Draft recommendation to the Council



Process Review

Task Force members have expressed their views on whether the HRC should be the “vehicle” for addressing human rights issues and/or promoting human rights. There was neither clear consensus nor majority one way or another (see the scale below). The committee was divided into two groups (count off, not the same groups as below) to explore responsibilities of a “BODY” that would be charged with promoting human rights through opportunities identified earlier: 1. **Education and Resources** to build awareness around human rights; 2. **Creating Community** through events and various activities; 3. Provide a **chance to tell a story** (air grievances); 4. **Advise the Council** on Human Rights issues



*Peggy was on the “line,” but even with her name under HRC the overall picture would not change significantly from clear consensus or significant majority point of view

The exercise below provided the Task Force members with an alternative way of looking at the focused question: Is there a need for a HRC? The responsibilities in each area can be carried out by one group (HRC or alternative) or various groups within the community. The discussion was focused on what can be done to promote human rights issues rather than addressing human rights issues directly (committee agreed that there are other agencies that are better equipped to handle the issues themselves). The consensus of the committee so far is that if there is a human rights **BODY**, it should be pro-active, fluid, and inclusive.

WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF A *HRC OR ALTERNATIVE BODY* IN THE AREAS OF...?

<i>Chance to tell story</i>	<i>Education & Resources</i>	<i>Help Build Community</i>	<i>Advise the Council</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comfortable place to air grievances - Process in place to address grievances - Stand ready to hear and defend human rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share ideas and resources with other HRCs (other communities) - Opportunity to work with neighboring agencies - Opportunities: duplicates state/county agencies - Share ideas with HRC network - Access to many schools and school systems - In the absence of human rights responses --- a body should be working to educate on human rights issues - Educate on high expectations of Golden Valley to protect and defend human rights - Educational opportunities - Educate about laws and constitutional amendments - Draw public attention to human rights issues - Bring awareness to recognize signs of abuse and provide guidelines (ageism) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emphasize building community through events - We have diversity to celebrate - Sponsor community events to bring the diverse community together (serve as planning body) - Organize human rights public education programs, events, or seminars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resource for City Council to hear, screen and make recommendations - Review and recommend city human rights policies upon request - Protect the City - A body to inform and advise city leaders in the objective non-partisan fashion
<p>Responsibility:</p> <p>DID NOT COMPLETE</p>	<p>Responsibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Keep updated list/resources (County, State, other) - Provide information in newsletter - Sensitize community at large to different groups - Educate on high expectations of human rights in Golden Valley - Speaking / attending events / schools 	<p>Responsibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Serve City Council as an advisory board - Create opportunities for dialogue in the community - Communicate that G.V. safe and welcoming place - Promote and facilitate HR issues in collaboration w/existing groups 	<p>Responsibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - conduct survey (gain community feedback and provide recommendations on facts) - report patterns of incidents

ATTACHMENT E: Additional Comments

A different point of view (A):

I respectfully reject the appropriateness of the recommendations made by the Task Force. After sitting through nine hours of meetings and reviewing data presented to the Task Force, I do not believe there is any legitimate need for a Human Rights Commission in Golden Valley, especially if it is to perform the multitude of tasks outlined in the recommendations. (The recommendations regarding the responsibilities of the HRC had no criteria to measure success or effectiveness).

I have stated my reasons why I have come to this conclusion and I will state them again:

1. Previous surveys of Golden Valley citizens did not indicate that Human Rights issues were foremost on citizens' minds, but that taxes and safety were very much an issue for them.
2. The number of complaints to the City regarding human rights issues are minimal.
3. There are other county, state and federal avenues available to people if they believe there are human rights violations in housing, employment or police actions.
4. According to a recent Money magazine report of the top 25 places to live in the USA, Minnesota had five cities make the list and only one has a HRC (Eden Prairie)

<http://money.cnn.com/magazines/moneymag/best-places/2012/top100/index>. It appears that having a HRC does not necessarily add any tangible value to the "livability" of a community.

5. Only 47 of the 800 communities in Minnesota have a Human Rights Commission so having one does not seem to be the standard in the State of Minnesota.

I suppose one could argue that because Golden Valley had a HRC that human rights issues are not a problem in Golden Valley. Since we have no data to back that up I am not inclined to think this to be true.

After assessing all of these data points and listening to the spirited discussions over three meetings, it just strikes me that a Golden Valley Human Rights Commission is a solution looking for a problem.

A different point of view (B):

- We [two members] believe anyone on City payroll should complete diversity training annually, including the Council.
- Also, the GVPD should not only have a peer review of any discrimination claim against it, they also need to have better accountability with an outside review of complaints which could be the HRC or a like.
- Bring Juneteenth back to Theodore Wirth Park in collaboration with Minneapolis.
- Reinstate the I have a Dream performances for Black History month at Perpich.