

Human Relations Commission
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, December 2, 2025
5:00 p.m.

1. **Call to Order:** 5:06 pm
2. **Roll Call:** Lydia Young, Michael Henle (Zoom), Mary Parks, David Dorsey, Terri Richardson-Sanders, Staff Liaison and Libni Lopez, Council Liaison
3. **Approval of the October 7th Meeting Minutes:** Minutes were unanimously approved.
4. **Old Business**
 - a. **2025 End of the Year Summary:** Young states that in January and February the HRC worked to get a lot done, they were able to get pamphlets and posters designed. She reassures everyone that that work was not done for no reason, it was just not the right time to release it yet. She states that those pamphlets and information will be important to get out in regards to people's education on their rights and how to handle certain situations. She praises the commission for being ahead of the curve on this. Young also brings up the Fair Housing Night, which she says was great and got a lot of organizations involved. She notes that this is especially important since so many organizations are losing grants and funding. Young hopes to make Fair Housing Night a yearly event for the HRC. Young praises the creation of the Commission for Human Dignity and their handling of human and civil rights within Oberlin. She states that she is glad Dorsey is in that commission and can keep the HRC updated with those issues. Young thinks that the Commission for Human Dignity is important because it allows people to talk about personal issues without having to go on record in a public meeting. She announces that this is Henle's last term and this will be his last meeting. Young thanks Henle for his hard work on the posters and on the committee over these last few years. Lastly, Young states that she will be typing an end of the year summary up and giving it to Richardson-Sanders to be sent over to the Clerk of Council's office so it will be on record.
 - b. **Update from the Commission for Human Dignity:** Dorsey states that they are on hold because they hoped to have a balance between commission members and community members. Currently, on the commission they have Carmen McFarlin and Francis who Dorsey hopes can attend an HRC meeting sometime. He states

that he needs to recruit a new member as someone has stepped down, but he has to wait for the recruitment of new members, so that puts them in a hold for now. Still, Dorsey is staying in touch with OCSI and other organizations. Dorsey would like to get going as soon as possible, as things in the political world are not on hold. He states that their monitoring hasn't stopped and he thanks OCSI. He states that he is concerned about many groups, so he is eager to get back to work. Young reiterates that monitoring is very important work and just knowing about things going on is crucial. Dorsey agrees and asks the Commission if there are any other groups or people he should get in contact with. He then asks Young if the Commission for Human Dignity will be able to grow in 2026 or if she foresees it staying the same size. She says that they will think and talk about it over the next month or two.

5. New Business

- a. **2026 Goals:** Young states that the big goal for the HRC is the implementation of the social equity plan. The HRC is named in the social equity plan to make sure things are happening with the plan. Richardson-Sanders condensed the social equity plan for the HRC so it is broken down into short term and long-term goals. The planning is over and now they are on to the action part of implementation, which the HRC will help with. Young states that the HRC is specifically named in housing, justice, ADA, mental health, and addiction issues. In February, Young states that she will come with a list of goals and timeline for the commission to work on in regards to the social equity plan. She states that they are already doing something, like fair housing night. She states that with everything that is going on right now they shouldn't be relying on outside funding, they should be pooling from community resources, like Bill DeFucci and other housing people within Oberlin. Young hopes to actually start working with Rural Response Network, and since their grant is until July, helping them with their work. In conversation she has had with them the Rural Response Network is on board with the HRC helping them. Young also helps to work on some ADA things this year, since the ADA is a legal requirement and the law isn't always equitable, she helps to work with business owners to make sure they are able to be equitable. Since ADA compliance can be very expensive, they should work not to blame the business owners but work with them. Lopez adds that some of this ADA work could fall under the Commission for Human Dignity, since there are people there also energized to do that work. He states that he has heard some people say that ADA requirements are not being enforced in new buildings, since this is not knowledge the City has, maybe the HRC or Commission for Human Dignity could

help with this. Dorsey mentions that Carmen McFarlin is a great resource for this and has already helped them a lot with ADA stuff. Young states that this is a good opportunity for many different groups to work together, like the high school that has a new program going on in which students do research on social problems affecting Oberlin. Also in 2026, they will be having conversations about how the HRC is formulated and how they will be meeting. Young says that the once a month HRC meetings are a lot and they do not always have things to talk about. She proposes quarterly meetings, individual meetings, and emails as a new way the HRC could be run in 2026 when the hope is they spend more time implementing, rather than meeting. Young informs the commission that there will be no meeting in January, as they will spend that month orientating the new boards and commission members. She states that outside conversations will be crucial if they meet less, in order to keep things moving. She states that they will talk more about the new structure with new members in February.

6. Community Liaison Update - T. Richardson-Sanders

- a. Richardson-Sanders announces that the social equity plan received The Norman Krumholz Award from the Ohio Senate. It is an equity award named after Norman Krumholz, a planner in the 60s in Cleveland who observed how people were in order to make his plans for all people. Richardson-Sanders states that the social equity plan is an important thing for the city to have and when she talks with people in the community, she sees that they also appreciate the plan and their efforts. The Ohio Senate recognized Oberlin's plan with this award and also recognized that Oberlin has for a long time been at the forefront of trying to make things equitable. Richardson-Sanders reiterates that it will be very important for the HRC to work with the social equity plan implementation group to get things moving on the plan. There have been two meetings so far of the implementation group, one where the city manager attended and was very impressed. The people in the group have brought great ideas like a down payment assistance program for fair housing. The city manager is impressed and excited for all these ideas. Richardson-Sanders mentions that she and Lopez did some work on the HRC handbook with Jessica and Sandra. They will continue to work on a handbook that presents all the boards and commissions in an accessible and useful way. She thanks Henle and young for all the work they've done with the HRC.

7. Council Communication - Libni Lopez

- a. Lopez announces that he will leave the HRC a list of the new commission members.
- b. **Development of Elderly Place:** Lopez states that the new senior living development plans were approved. The development allows for tax credits, which will make the place affordable, but there is some controversy since it may cut into school tax. Lopez says that there will be more negotiating going on among the involved parties. He mentions that they are moving very fast in this development, and they are hoping to break ground by late spring/early summer of 2026. Dorsey asked how the location of this facility was chosen, Lopez says it was a private land owner who wanted it to be affordable senior housing. Green Acres was just approved for excavating services.
- c. **Other updates:** Lopez announces that Oberlin approved the Oberlin Connector to be funded another year. He asked about their funding structure and one of their contracts states that people that are low-income can request a car at half fare. This is confusing to do and the information was buried in a document. The Oberlin Connector currently has no system to keep information and the only way to reach them is to call. The Oberlin E-Bus was also approved for another year of funding. They have hired a dispatcher that provides the workers and their salaries. They are repaving the sidewalk by the old OCS building, the Nord Foundation agreed to pay for some of this and help keep it maintained. A price of property across the street from Walmart was sold, 20,000 acres. It was sold to Sportsplex, the soccer league so hopefully they can expand. Lopez updates the HRC that there was a long budget meeting where they discussed the budget for the upcoming year. Every department came in to discuss what they needed. There are still adjustments going on with the budget, like the police that requested an electric cruiser, now will have to have a gas powered cruiser due to constraints. Lopez pushed for the ordinance to ban conversion therapy, which will be discussed in the next city council meeting. The Council approved all boards and commissions for 2026. Dorsey asked if every board got more applicants or if it was just the HRC and what contributed to this. Lopez said that it was all boards and he attributes this to advertising and more time given for applicants to look everything over. Lopez announced the new HRC members as Melissa George, Mary Parks, and Rebecca Thompson. He advises that everyone who applies should put care into their application, because that is all the information they have to decide on members. He talks a little about the process

of choosing the members, Lopez states that the new members interests and past experience will be very valuable to the HRC. Young asks if Lopez will still be the council liaison to the HRC next year. He states that, that will be determined later and that that is determined each term. Young clarifies that Richardson-Sanders is a constant member of the HRC, since it is a part of her job description as the community liaison. Young asks Lopez how they can get more members, since they are doing a lot with the social equity plan and the member amount was written as an ordinance. Lopez says that the social equity plan has its own implementation group, so he wants to see how they interact before they get to know HRC members. Young is still concerned since the HRC was named in the social equity plan. Lopez defines his role as purely informational. Dorsey thanks Lopez for all his work he has done with and for HRC centered issues. Lopez states that they are still in conversation about who will be the City Council Liaison and that it will be decided at the beginning of the year. The Commission expresses their want to keep Lopez on as their liaison. Dorsey makes a motion for Young to write a letter on behalf of the HRC asking for Lopez to remain their liaison. Parks seconds and the motion were unanimously approved. Lopez states that no matter what he is representing the council in these meetings.

- d. Young reminds everyone that there will be a new member orientation in January, but she is not sure if it is open to old members. Lopez states that currently Belinda is working on a schedule and he is hoping that it can be recorded for those that cannot attend. He does not think they will have old members attend this orientation. Dorsey states that he thinks transitions are a good time to make sure the commission is all on the same page. Young thinks a simple welcome meeting would help a lot with this, so she will work on that with Lopez and Richardson-Sanders. Dorsey clarified that the new members start on January first, but orientation may be January 16th. Young states that she will have individual meetings with all the new members and they could all reach out and say hello, before January 1st. Dorsey moves on and brings up the effect winter is having on the unhoused individuals, he thinks the commission should pay attention to this. Young agrees and names mental health as an issue that deserves serious attention.
- e. Henle makes the motion to adjourn, Parks Seconds: 6:12pm

Jepson Richardson-Sanders