

**Bismarck Human Relations
Committee Annual Report**



January 2024-December 2024

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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.

2024 COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Chair –Thea Jorgensen
- Vice Chair-Gabrielle Abouassaly
- Geraldine Ambe
- Jason Grueneich
- Katie Houle
- Katryce Kluck
- Sashay Schettler
- Sargianna Wutzke
- Carl Young

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



2023 Humanitarian of the Year Awards

Micah Olson

Micah works as an attorney for the North Dakota Projection and Advocacy Project and advocates for the needs of individuals with disabilities. He also served as an advocate at the Independent Center for Independent Living in Minot.

“Micah uses his own experience with his disability to motivate his work and give a voice to issues affecting the disabled,” said the individual who nominated Olson, but desired anonymity. “He has testified on bills before the state legislature on issues such as accessible housing and transportation. He continually fights for what is right, no matter how difficult the challenge may be and is not one to back away.”



Sanford Health

Sanford Health is one of the largest employers in Bismarck. It has prioritized diversity, equity and inclusion since 2021 to mature and expand the initiatives that provide, expand and scale lasting and meaningful impact to its employees, patients and community.

“When a healthcare organization prioritizes these efforts, the outcome is that underrepresented populations feel valued and comfortable to seek out preventative healthcare,” said Natasha Smith, who nominated her workplace for the award. “This has an impact on the health disparities we know exist in our communities.”



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. This event is an annual, family-oriented event that celebrates the LGBTQIA2S+ community. During the Capital Pride event, we 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.



Juneteenth

The Bismarck Human Relations Committee sponsored and participated in the Juneteenth event. This event celebrated freedom and culture and was filled with learning and community spirit. The Bismarck Human Relations Committee had a table at the event where committee members were able to visit with the individuals attending the event about the mission and purpose of the committee as well as the activities that the committee is doing in the Bismarck community.



High Plains Fair Housing Event

The Bismarck Human Relations Committee sponsored and participated in the High Plains Fair Housing Event. At this event, the movie Evicted was shown. After the movie, several community leaders came together to discuss the homeownership gap and other barriers to housing. The committee members were able to visit with those in attendance about the committee.



Community Conversations Forum

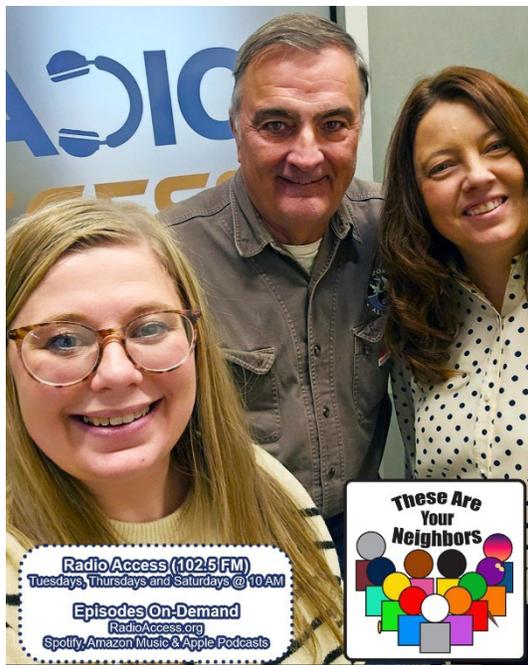
The City of Bismarck's Human Relations Committee Community Conversations Forum is an opportunity to facilitate important conversations about the adversities that many of our neighbor's face, here in Bismarck. A panel of subject matter experts address various issues in the community, with the hopes of building an ongoing conversation with the City Commission, as well as other community organizations and members. In 2024, we had three events focusing on the topics of being a diverse community, accessibility and housing.





[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 2024 include Commissioner John Risch, Mayor Mike Schmitz, BHRC members, Carl Young and Gabby Abouassaly, Sydney Helgesen, Renae Moch, Dawn Kopp and Jim Barnhardt.



2024 was a jam packed year and we are looking forward to 2025!!!

