



## Bismarck Human Relations Committee

The Bismarck Human Relations Committee is scheduled to meet on Monday, February 26, 2024, at 5:15 PM in the 4th Floor Mayor's Conference Room, City/County Office Building, 221 North Fifth Street, Bismarck, North Dakota.

### HRC Mission

The purpose 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.

### Call To Order

1. Public Comment
2. Approval Of Meeting Minutes

#### Documents:

[1.22.2024 - Minutes.pdf](#)

3. Community Conversations Discussion
4. Annual Report Discussion

#### Documents:

[2022 Human Relations Committee Annual Report.pdf](#)

5. Brochure Discussion

#### Documents:

[HRC Brochure\\_02202024.pdf](#)

6. Other Business

### Adjourn

Next meeting: 5:15 PM, March 18, 2024  
4th Floor Mayor's Conference Room- Bismarck City/County Building  
221 N 5th Street, Bismarck, ND





## Bismarck Human Relations Committee

1/22/2024 - Minutes

HRC Mission

Chair Grueneich read the mission statement.

Call To Order

Chair Grueneich called the meeting to order at 5:15 PM. Members present were Jason Grueneich, Sargianna Wutzke, Thea Jorgensen, Carl Young, Sashay Schettler, Gabby Abouassaly and Katie Houle. Members absent were Geraldine Ambe and Katrice Kluck.

### 1. Public Comment

No public comment was received.

### 2. Introduction Of New Members

Current committee members introduced themselves to new member Katie Houle.

### 3. Election Of Officers

Sargianna Wutzke motioned to nominate Thea Jorgensen as committee chair, and Carl Young seconded. Upon a roll call vote, all voted aye. M/C.

Carl Young motioned to nominate Gabby Abouassaly as committee vice chair, and Thea Jorgensen seconded. Upon a roll call vote, all voted aye. M/C.

### 4. Approval Of Meeting Minutes

Sargianna Wutzke motioned to approve the minutes as presented, and Sashay Schettler seconded. Upon a roll call vote, all voted aye. M/C.

### 5. Community Conversations Discussion

Chair Grueneich provided an overview of the Community Conversations Discussion program. The intended panelists will include Dan Eastgate (BPS School Board Member), President Leander McDonald (United Tribes Technical College), Sister Kathleen Atkinson (Ministry on the Margins), Dawn Kopp or Kate Herzog (Downtowners), Jasmine Tosseth-Smith (Bismarck Global Neighbors), and Brian Ritter (Sanford Health). Alternates include Holly Triska-Dally, Erica Thunder, Jan Stankiewicz, and Mark Meyer. Committee members discussed the questions that will be asked of the panelists, which include:

1. Diversity in the City and what does it mean to you?
2. Have you, or those you serve, experienced adversities in Bismarck?
3. How do these experiences impact your sense of belonging in the community?

HRC members will reach out to panelists to confirm their availability, and Chair Grueneich will coordinate with panelists prior to the event.

#### 6. Equity In Emergency Management Planning Update

Member Jorgensen provided an update, and she will continue to work with City Emergency Manager Gary Stockert.

#### 7. Other Business

1. Humanitarian Award: The Committee discussed the Humanitarian Award for 2023. The consensus of the group is to request nominations in August 2024, consider the applications in September 2024, and present the awards at the Annual Anniversary Celebration in October 2024.
2. Annual Report: The Committee discussed the annual report, which will be delivered at the City Commission meeting on April 9, 2024. Committee Members Grueneich and Wutzke agreed to collaborate on the project for the 2023 report. The consensus of the group is to have multiple committee members attend and report on the Committee's activities over the past year.
3. These Are Your Neighbors: Thea Jorgensen provided an update on the program.
4. Invocation for Community Conversation: The Committee discussed having an invocation presented at the event by a local member(s) of faith-based organizations.

Adjourn

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 6:45 PM.

**Bismarck Human Relations  
Committee Annual Report**



**January 2022-December 2022**

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Mission of Committee .....	3
Goals of Committee .....	3
Establishment of Committee .....	3
Appointment to Committee .....	4
Committee Meeting Times and Location .....	4
Committee Members .....	4
Publications and Other Information .....	5
Contact Information .....	5
Humanitarian of the Year Awards.....	6-7
Activities of Committee .....	8-18

## **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 principle 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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.

## **2022 COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

- Chair – Trevor Vannett
- Vice Chair – Jason Grueneich
- Thea Jorgensen
- Geraldine Ambe
- Darcy Andahl
- Nicole Ralph
- Sashay Schettler
- Sargianna Wutzke
- Carl Young
- Julie Ramos Lagos

## **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](http://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](http://www.bismarcknd.gov)



# Humanitarian of the Year Awards

## Geraldine Ambe

Geraldine is the dance teacher to the dance troupe, Youth in Action. Geraldine teaches traditional African dances to this group that performs these dances at a variety of local events. Geraldine is also involved with the Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Commission as well as is on the board for Global Neighbors.

Geraldine is an activist for causes relating to the ongoing civil war in Cameroon. She and a small group in 2016 decided to start an "online revolution in Cameroon" to speak out against what they saw as mismanagement of the government. She also is a co-founder of the Southern Cameroon's Women's Movement.

Geraldine works at High Plains Fair Housing Center. The mission of High Plains Fair Housing Center is to strengthen communities and to ensure equal access to fair housing through training, education, enforcement, and advocacy She holds a degree in Computer Information Technology from United Tribes Technical College.



# Bismarck Veteran's Memorial Public Library

The Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library was nominated for its many services and welcoming atmosphere available to our community and residents. The library provides equal service and a safe gathering space for the citizens of Bismarck/Burleigh County regardless of social standing, race, color, sex, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, or mental or physical disability.

Additionally, the Library Board of Trustees recently approved a new section in the Library's Public Service Policy titled Youth Anti-Bullying Prevention. This policy "aims to protect the dignity and safety of youth served by the Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library. Bullying, harassment, and intimidation in all youth-serving Library services, activities, programs, and facilities are prohibited."



## LOGO DESIGN COLLABORATION

The BHRC collaborated with Bismarck Public Schools Career Academy & Technical Center and student Taylor Cook for a new logo for the committee. The logo that the committee was using did not print well on items and committee members felt that there was a need for a logo showing more diversity.

Taylor created an updated logo for the committee's use as one of her community projects through Empower [Ed], a personalized path to graduation based on who students are and how they learn best. Taylor provided a series of conceptual drawings to the committee for their initial review and revised the concepts to reflect the wishes of committee members.

BHRC member, Jason Grueneich stated "Our partnership with the Career Academy and Taylor Cook couldn't have been a better fit. She put her creative skills to use on an authentic project that resulted in a logo that strengthened our brand." The logo will be used for marketing for the committee for many years to come and we are ecstatic that we were able to give a high school student a chance to complete this project for us. The logo was released in January and has been widely used by the committee.



## 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.



## **BAND NIGHT PARADE**

The committee along with some community members walked in the Band Night Parade. The members shared information and some sweets with the people along the parade route. The members enjoyed walking and visiting with citizens and were glad that the weather changed for the better right before the parade started that night.





The Bismarck Human Relations Committee



## CAPITAL PRIDE EVENT

The Bismarck Human Relations Committee participated in the Capital Pride Event.

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. We were beyond proud as Committee member, Jason Grueneich, received the 2022 Champion of Capitol Pride for his extensive work and efforts on behalf of the LGBTQIA2S+ community at the event.



## BHRC 20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

The Bismarck Human Relations Committee hosted a 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration at the Bismarck Public Library on October 22nd. This event invited the community to celebrate the past twenty years of the impact of the Human Relations Committee. The event featured speakers including Mayor Mike Schmitz and Bill Patrie as well Humanitarian of the Year recipients, Geraldine Ambe and Jonathan Frye from Dakota Outright. The entertainment for the event included an African dance troupe, a singer, and the Bismarck Public Schools Native American Dancers, and a Drum Circle.



**20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY EVENT**



**GERALDINE AMBE**



**YOUTH IN ACTION**



**NATIVE AMERICAN DANCERS**



**JEFFREY KWASI BOAKEY**  
**YIADOM**

## MUNICIPAL EQUALITY INDEX RATING

The Bismarck HRC has worked, along with city administration, to coordinate efforts on spotlighting areas of improvement within the city departments to improve inclusion, equality, and accessibility for our LGBTQ+ citizens.

As the HRC is looking forward towards a more sustainable future for our great city, we continue to focus on increasing our city's index rating scorecard. This scorecard focuses on best practices to support LGBTQ+ community members, employees, and businesses. This is taking another step towards the values in the City Strategy Plan and creating community pride.

We met with department heads and coordinated strategic planning. We improved our score by two points from the previous scorecard. We continue to work on this, and we believe, with our current efforts, that we will continue to raise our score.

HRC believes accountability is necessary from all stakeholders; including city employees, elected officials, and community partners, to improve the index scorecard rating and overall well-being of Bismarck. HRC looks forward to the next 12 months of welcoming diversity, exhibiting community pride, acting with integrity, and looking towards the future with this project!

## EXCITING THINGS COMING IN 2023

### These are Your Neighbors Podcast

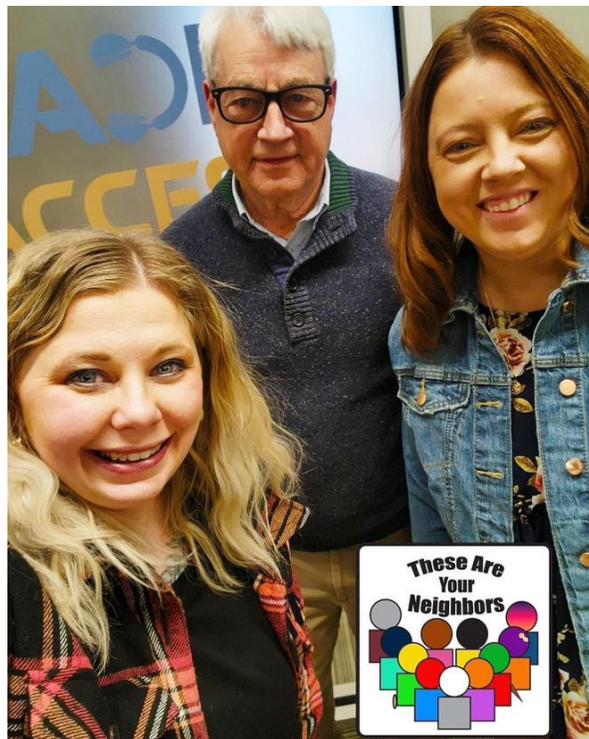
These are your Neighbors is a podcast hosted by Human Relations Committee Members, Thea Jorgensen and Sargianna Wutzke. Through conversations with diverse change makers in the community, the podcast hopes to strengthen inclusivity amongst the Bismarck community, by encouraging others to get to know their neighbors. The podcast was taped by Dakota Media Access and airs on 102.5 on Tuesdays at 7am and Saturdays at 10 am. Some of the change makers featured in 2023 include Bill Patrie, Jasmine Tosseth-Smith, Megan Mann, Jason Greuneich (BHRC chair), Sister Kathleen Atkinson, Roxane Romanick, Stacy Shaffer, and Nancy Guy.

### 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 plans 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.





## Committee

## Programs & Events

- Capital Pride
- City of Bismarck Humanitarian Award
- Essay Contest
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration
- These Are Your Neighbors Podcast
- And More!

## Meeting Times / Locations

The Bismarck Human Relations Committee meets the third Monday of each month at 5:15 PM, with the exception of holidays. Meetings are held in the 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Mayor's Conference Room, 221 North 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Bismarck, ND. Meetings are open to the public and public comments are welcomed.

## Mission Statement

The purpose 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.

## History

Ordinance No. 5208 created the Bismarck Human Relations Committee (HRC) and received final passage on October 8, 2002. The HRC'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, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) violations, or other statutory or constitutional violations.



[www.bismarcknd.gov/](http://www.bismarcknd.gov/)  
HumanRelationsCommittee



## Appointment to the Committee

The Human Relations Committee consists of nine members who serve without pay. Members are appointed by the President of the Board of City Commissioners and are subject to confirmation by the Board of City Commissioners. Appointees serve three-year terms.



**“To deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity”**

Nelson Mandela



### Committee Members

Gabrielle Abouassaly - Vice Chair

Geraldine Ambe

Jason Grueneich

Katie Houle

Thea Jorgensen - Chair

Katryce Kluck

Sashay Schettler

Sargianna Wutzke

Carl Young

### Goals of the Committee

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

- To exhibit leadership in the areas of civil and human rights.
- To educate the public about civil and human rights.
- To identify issues of principal concern in the area of civil and human rights.
- To recommend priorities and objectives about issues of community concern to the City Commission.
- 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) & 14-02.5 (housing) of the City Code of ordinances.