

Staff Report

DISCUSSION ON MODIFICATIONS TO *MUNICIPAL CODE* CHAPTER 14: HUMAN RELATIONS

November 18, 2025

BACKGROUND:

In 2019, the Ames Human Relations Commission (AHRC) stopped investigating civil rights complaints and switched to contracting with the Iowa Office of Civil Rights (IOCR) to investigate such claims. Since that significant shift in its function, AHRC has been exploring its evolving mission and priorities.

The AHRC would like the Council to consider several changes to [Municipal Code Chapter 14: Human Relations](#) to better align the code with its current activities and objectives.

Chapter 14 was most recently amended in 2024, when the City Council increased AHRC from five to seven members. This change was prompted by AHRC's increased outreach activities in the community. In June 2024, a strategic planning retreat was held with the expanded membership. The discussion initially focused on updates to the strategic plan. **However, the conversation shifted as commissioners identified a lack of alignment between Chapter 14's description of AHRC's powers and duties and the role AHRC has shifted towards as it increases outreach and presence in the community.**

Over the past year, AHRC has researched examples of language from the codes of peer cities in Iowa, discussing desired elements to emulate. The Commission has worked on proposed revisions that it would like Council to consider.

A summary of the changes the Commission would like to see include:

1. Sec. 14.1, "Purpose of Chapter"

- Clarify that discriminatory practices are prohibited.
- Correct a typographical error by adding a missing word.
- Update the Iowa Civil Rights Commission to reflect its recent renaming as the Iowa Office of Civil Rights.

2. Sec. 14.5, "Powers and Duties"

Revise the description of Commission's powers and duties to use more accessible language and to emphasize the focus on community outreach and engagement.

The revision proposed by the Commission, but not yet reviewed by City Attorney, would read as:

"The Commission shall have the following powers and duties:

1. To facilitate coordination and connection among community groups to amplify the impact of their efforts toward ending discrimination and reducing inequality in the community.
2. To collaborate with organizations and individuals in the community to plan and participate in events that connect various populations through celebration of culture and inclusion.
3. To listen to community members and provide access to resources that may help resolve discrimination complaints, including connecting residents with the Iowa Office of Civil Rights when enforcement action may be needed.
4. To gather information and provide an annual report to the City Council about the status of human rights in the community and the commission's activities promoting belonging among various populations recognized in the community.
5. To recommend policies and programs that promote human rights of persons and groups in the community to the mayor and City Council.
6. To manage any city funds, donations, or grants given to the commission for promoting the purposes of this chapter."

OPTIONS:

If the Council is supportive of considering the Commission's recommendations, it would be appropriate for the Council to make a motion directing the City Attorney to draft proposed modifications to Chapter 14 of the *Municipal Code*.

STAFF COMMENTS:

City Staff agrees with the Commission that modifications would be appropriate and beneficial to align the *Municipal Code* language with the Commission's current activities.

ATTACHMENT(S):