

Meeting Minutes

Human Right and Equity Commission

January 13, 2026, from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.

Council Chambers, and online

1. Called to order at 4:30 p.m. by Roll Call and Welcome: Commissioners.

- 1.1. Agatha Ventura, Chair – attended in person.
- 1.2. Jackie Currie, Council Connector – attended in person.
- 1.3. Scott Jones, Commissioner Connector – attended in person.
- 1.4. Brittany Ellenberg – attended in person.
- 1.5. Cristina Morales Moyano – attended in person.
- 1.6. Eli Loewenstern – attended online.
- 1.7. Jennifer (Jenn) Kovitz – in person.
- 1.8. Mario Anguiano – attended online.
- 1.9. Mary (Bet) Hannon – attended in person.
- 1.10. Ruth Vernotico – attended online.
- 1.11. Navjot (Navi) Hughes (alternate) (Welcome) – attended online.
- 1.12. Kinsey Martin (ex officio) – attended in person.

City of Bend Staff:

- Kathi Barguil, She/They/Ella, Community Relations Manager (Chambers)
- Megan Perkins, She/Her, Councilor / Mayor Pro Tem / HREC Council Liaison (Council Chambers)
- Ian Leitheiser, He/Him, City Attorney (Chamber)
- Stephanie Betteridge, She/Her, Assistant City Manager & Chief Innovations Officer (Chambers)
- Cassandra Kehoe, She/Her/Ella, Accessibility & Equity Manager / COBAAC Staff Liaison (Zoom)
- Ashley Bontje, She/Her, City Recorder (Chambers)

Presentation:

- Ben Duncan, He/Him, Kearns & West. Bend Equity Infrastructure Analysis

2. City of Bend Land Acknowledgement Statement: Kathi Barguil, She/Her, Community Relations Manager & HREC Staff Liaison.

Based on consultation with the Warm Springs Tribal Council, City Council has moved away from reading the land acknowledgement at every council meeting and will be migrating towards a Sovereignty Acknowledgement, which is currently being developed. We honor this request at this meeting and instead would like to share some opportunities to directly support and engage with the Warm Springs community. This can be an evolving list that can be added onto and distributed while the Sovereignty Acknowledgement development proceeds.



3. HREC Business: Agatha Ventura, Chair.

- a. Minutes: Approval of December 18, 2025, Draft Minutes / VOTE: HREC Annual Leadership Nominations

December 18, 2025, meeting minutes approved unanimously.

The voice vote passed 10-0:

- **Yes:** Ventura, Currie, Jones, Ellenberg, Morales Moyano, Loewenstern, Kovitz, Anguiano, Hannon, Vernotico.
- **No:** none

Commissioner Kovitz recognized Chair Ventura for her service and Community Relations Manager Kathi Barguil, Staff Liaison, for her support of HREC.

Barguil announced the Community Connector role and shared a description of the role.

Kovitz moved to formalize the community connection role. Commissioners Vernotico and Ellenberg seconded the motion.

The voice vote passed 10-0:

- **Yes:** Ventura, Currie, Jones, Ellenberg, Morales Moyano, Loewenstern, Kovitz, Anguiano, Hannon, Vernotico.
- **No:** none

Barguil shared the nominations that were received via email:

- **Chair:** Scott Jones
- **Vice Chair:** Jenn Kovitz, Mario Anguiano
- **Council Connector:** Ruth Vernotico
- **Commissioner Connector:** Bet Hannon
- **Community Connector:** Cristina Morales Moyano

Withdrew: Commissioner Anguiano withdrew his name from the nomination.

Noted: Commissioner Vernotico noted that the discussion was to have two community connectors and HREC supported this notation.

Self-Nomination: Commissioner Ellenberg nominated herself for community connectors.

Discussed quorum issues and suggested the community connectors each alternating leadership meetings to avoid risk of quorum.

Vernotico moved to approve two community connectors. Currie seconded the motion.

The voice vote passed 10-0:

- **Yes:** Ventura, Currie, Jones, Ellenberg, Morales Moyano, Loewenstern, Kovitz, Anguiano, Hannon, Vernotico
- **No:** none

Chair Ventura:

Asked for votes.

Vote for Scott Jones, Chair.

The voice vote passed 9-0:

- **Yes:** Ventura, Currie, Ellenberg, Morales Moyano, Loewenstern, Kovitz, Anguiano, Hannon, Vernotico.
- **No:** none.
- **Abstain:** Jones.

***-/Vote for Jenn Kovitz, Vice Chair.**

The voice vote passed 9-0:

- **Yes:** Ventura, Currie, Ellenberg, Morales Moyano, Loewenstern, Kovitz, Anguiano, Hannon, Vernotico.
- **No:** none.
- **Abstain:** Jones.

Vote for Ruth Vernotico, Council Connector.

The voice vote passed 9-0:

- **Yes:** Ventura, Currie, Jones, Ellenberg, Morales Moyano, Loewenstern, Kovitz, Anguiano, Hannon.
- **Abstain:** Vernotico.

Vote for Bet Hannon, Commissioner Connector.

The voice vote passed 9-0:

- **Yes:** Ventura, Currie, Jones, Ellenberg, Morales Moyano, Loewenstern, Kovitz, Anguiano, Vernotico.
- **No:** none.
- **Abstain:** Hannon.

Vote for Cristina Morales Moyano, Community Connector (position 1 of 2).

The voice vote passed 9-0:

- **Yes:** Ventura, Currie, Jones, Ellenberg, Loewenstern, Kovitz, Anguiano, Hannon, Vernotico.
- **No:** none.
- **Abstain:** Morales Moyano.

Vote for Brittany Ellenberg, Community Connector (position 2 of 2).

The voice vote passed 9-0:

- **Yes:** Ventura, Currie, Jones, Morales Moyano, Loewenstern, Kovitz, Anguiano, Hannon, Vernotico.
- **No:** none.
- **Abstain:** Ellenberg.

4. Standing Item: HREC Council Liaison Update Megan Perkins, She/Her

- a. FLOCK Camera Update and Council Discussion.
- b. January 7 Latino Community Association Presentation to Council.
- c. Electrification Update.

Mayor Pro Tem Perkins provided the updates:

- The Latino Community Association (LCA) requested City Council declare a state of emergency and asked to continue the office hours the City of Bend holds at the LCA and offered an immigrant

defense rights training. The City is working on a policy as to how the sanctuary act applies on City property, including buildings and parking lots. Two large affordable housing units, in partnership with LCA, are breaking grounds.

- Council decided to turn off FLOCK cameras, which are automated license plate readers, entirely and will not renew the contract. Additionally, the City will review internal policies before moving forward with another automated license plate reader vendor.
- Council agreed that HREC should be involved in the Electrification Fee development process, but the role is yet to be defined.

Commissioner Vernotico voiced concerns about impacts of individual Councilor investments on their decisions regarding Electrification. City Attorney Ian Leitheiser stated that investments are not a conflict of interest.

Leitheiser provided clarification on the meaning of a City's State of Emergency. HREC Commissioners and Leitheiser discussed practical implications of the State of Emergency and how the public would be protected.

HREC asked if they could provide input on the policy. Leitheiser stated that the administrative policy would not go to HREC for feedback as it is largely an interpretation of State Law and creation of internal processes.

Commissioner Ventura asked if HREC could provide feedback on automated license plate reader policy or future contracts. Mayor Pro Tem Perkins was supportive of this request and committed to soliciting HREC's input and feedback on any future license plate reader contract.

Commissioner Ellenberg requested a vendor update before the next meeting, to provide more meaningful feedback.

5. Staff Liaison Update: Community Relations Manager & HREC Staff Liaison Kathi Barguil, She/Her.

Tyler Deke, Manager of the Bend Metropolitan Planning Organization, shared an update from the Transportation Safety Action Plan and ways that HREC could be involved in the engagement and outreach of the plan. Deke requested an HREC member serve on an advisory body, and asked if HREC would like to provide feedback. This was an introduction, and no action was taken at this time.

Barguil stated that she would provide further information regarding the Transportation Safety Action Plan for Commissioners to consider.

Barguil provided updates on the HREC Workplan development and implementation timeline.

Barguil shared upcoming community events.

6. Business: Ben Duncan, He/Him, Kearns & West. Bend Equity Infrastructure Analysis.

Duncan outlined the focus of his work in providing an analysis of the City's Equity Structure and shared desired outcomes for today, which were to provide an update on approach and next steps and to receive feedback on structural support(s) that can advance the purpose and impact of the Commission. Duncan interviewed and discussed with key stakeholders and reviewed key plans and documents.

Duncan provided an analysis of HREC and advisory bodies. HREC is seen as valuable structures for advancing equity work, but clarity is needed around authority and decision-making influence. Duncan determined that there is a need to strengthen the role and vision of these groups.

Duncan reviewed the HREC Purpose, as posted on the City's website, and asked if this is the purpose, what does HREC need to be successful.

Duncan presented HREC with questions for discussion.

- Is there anything missing from the analysis that should inform final recommendations related to HREC?
- What would be most valuable, in terms of structural rather than individual support(s), for HREC to fulfill its purpose?
- Anything else consultant should know from your perspective?

Duncan provided next steps, which would be to incorporate input from tonight's discussion, draft initial set of recommendations/report with strengths and weaknesses of different organizational models, present to Council at its January 28, 2026, Work Session, and provide final recommendations report to City Manager by February 1, 2026. Duncan noted that while the report will be public, *any structural changes will be the responsibility of City Leadership.*

Commissioner Vernotico requested background on how Duncan was hired for this role and what boundaries were set to remain impartial.

Duncan responded that he heard about former City of Bend Equity and Inclusion Director Andrés Portela's departure from the City of Bend and reached out directly to City Manager Eric King. Duncan has a background in government and seeing black leaders leave organizations. Duncan did not have any existing relationships with the City of Bend. Duncan noted that his organization, Kearns & West, is a third-party consultancy. Duncan noted that he had done some work with HREC during Anna Allen's tenure.

Commissioner Currie asked if Duncan had seen any of the work done with HREC during Anna Allen's tenure realized.

Duncan stated that Anna Allen was the first Equity Director and this work took place about 5 years ago. Duncan noted that he did not track changes, but that the HREC/City relationship was a mess at that time and things have improved, though Duncan did not take credit for the changes.

Commissioner Ventura addressed discussion question 2 and noted that the current HREC Liaison, and the City of Bend staff who is leading the supporting the equity or community work needing to be well versed in the intricate parts of this work. There is a need for someone in City leadership who understands and has experience handling structural and community inequities.

Commissioner Hannon suggests that the requirements should be someone who currently understands structural racism and discrimination framework.

Commissioner Kovitz noted that the reporting structure will largely influence the success of the liaison. The manager of the liaisons will need to be able to support the staff liaison. Kovitz stated that the staff liaison needs a work plan and who knows how to get HREC there.

Commissioner Currie requested clarity around the structure system of the staff liaison. Currie felt there needs to be structural frameworks around what the advisory body is doing and how that gets to Council. Currie noted that the Council Liaison system is not structured and felt there needs to be structure around how information flows between Council and advisory bodies.

Commissioner Jones emphasized the importance of the reporting structure, and cited an example from personal experience, encouraging the Equity Director position to report directly to executive leadership.

Commissioner Ellenberg commented on the input/output dynamic, noting the importance of receiving information in advance to provide time to review. Additionally, if Council brings materials to HREC, Ellenberg would like a specific ask and should expect output to be HREC's position on this. Ellenberg noted that Council should expect output if HREC is given input. Ellenberg also commented on the community connector role and suggested a structure around community connections through the connector role.

HREC confirmed that there is not currently a structure for a timeline in receiving meeting materials in advance. HREC did not have clarity on the role of community connector but felt it would be developed.

Commissioner Morales expressed the importance of getting involved with the community to learn about community issues. City support(s) could include a more casual or private setting, as the HREC public meeting can be intimidating for the public.

Commissioner Kovitz suggested rotating this meeting quarterly to hold the meeting in alternative community spaces. Commissioner Kovitz recognized that there would be technological implications. City support included technology support.

Commissioner Loewenstern noted there are many human rights violations occurring in the community and in the world and does not feel that HREC is doing enough to address those issues. HREC needs structural support to help HREC discuss the real issues that are occurring and follow up to improve the lives of people and felt that community partnerships can be disorganized. Also noted by Loewenstern was more support to the homeless crisis and what HREC can do to help from the City and community partners.

Commissioner Ventura would like to know more about the DEIA advisory board and would like to open the HREC meeting to other Council members.

7. Public Comment: Limited to 2 minutes for each public comment.

In Person:

- Michael Funke shared a perspective on structure and would like to see more flexibility in terms of what the City allows HREC to do.
- Dalton Miller Jones discussed role of human rights commissions in various communities, and would like HREC to be a body of incisive change and asked if Ben Duncan's analysis will include input on issues outside of the Bend city limits, such as law enforcement issues of county and state, health crisis, etc.
- Priscilla Calleros encouraged Duncan to have conversations with community members who were connected with Andrés Portela, as many in this room caused him the most harm.
- Joslyn Stanfield commented on accountability of bend city employees and suggested more clarity about who is accountable. Stanfield did not see any accountability on the part of the City relating to Portela's departure.
- Kenneth Adams, executive director of The Father's Group, addressed accountability, longevity, and follow-up. Adams felt that community issues recur and have not been addressed encourage HREC and the City to move past listening and to taking action, which HREC cannot do along but needs the action of the City and Council.

Ventura approved an extension of 15 minutes to allow more time for comments. HREC gave support.

- Ricardo Waites, radio station owner, agreed with Adams' comments, and noted that changes are not happening and expressed fear over the future for people of color in Bend.
- Joe Katroschik spoke about personal experiences and encouraged HREC to find encouragement and thanked HREC for their work.
- Joslyn Stanfield spoke again and discussed the ongoing trauma around the killing of Barry Washington, Jr., and noted that the City could provide services or support to address community trauma.

Online:

- Kerani Mitchell, online, shared the City needs to listen and believe those who are affected by systemic racism and hoped Duncan would uplift the voices of black folks and others impacted by inequity.
- Gordon Price shared concerns over the lack of scope of HREC.

Commissioner's final thoughts:

- Commissioner Kovitz explained public comment is taken at City Council Business Meetings, and not work sessions, and invited community to provide public comment at the January 21, 2026, City Council meeting in advance of the January 28, 2026, Work Session in which Ben Duncan will provide an update.
- Commissioner Kovitz stressed the importance of sharing this report with/to the community and would like to consider community discussions around it.

8. Roundtable of HREC Commissioners:

- Commissioner Jones thanked everyone who came for public comments and thanked Ben Duncan for his time and focus.
- Commissioner Hannon supported Commissioner Kovitz suggestion of communicating Duncan's report and expressed hope that action will come out of the report.
- Commissioner Morales would like to find ways to take action and build a better community.
- Commissioner Ellenberg expressed the need to challenge each other and provided meaningful input to the City.
- Commissioner Vernotico thanked the public who participated in the meeting. Commissioner Vernotico has experienced toxicity in the Mayor's and City Manager's government, feels the City is a toxic place to work due to leadership, and it needs to be addressed in order change to happen.

9. Adjourned at 6:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Lisa Larsen (AB), Administrative Support Specialist



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