



# Commissioner Operational Handbook

Minneapolis Commission on Civil Rights

# MCCR Operational Handbook

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## Section 1: Background Information

### Role of a City Commission

Commissions serve as a link between the public and City government. The information and advice that Commissions provide about community needs, concerns and opinions can have a profound impact on City policies and lead to improved services for all residents.

Commissions are most effective when they engage members of the public, outside experts, and individuals within City government to develop timely, relevant, well-researched, thoughtfully analyzed recommendations and reports on issues of importance.

### History of the Commission

Protection of civil rights within the City of Minneapolis can be traced back over a half century. In 1946, Mayor Hubert H. Humphrey established by executive order the Mayor's Fair Employment Practices Commission to assure that equal access to jobs in the City for all citizens.

During the 1950s, the City remained engaged in implementing fair employment practices. In fact, the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC) gained national recognition for its work and some members were chosen to serve on a special committee to advise the President of the United States on the formation of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission under Title VII of the U.S. Civil Rights Act of 1964.

In August 1967, the City passed the Minneapolis Civil Rights Ordinance. The ordinance created the Department of Civil Rights as an administrative, enforcement, and investigative body. In addition, the Human Rights Commission (renamed the Commission on Civil Rights in 1975) was created as an advisory and adjudicative body.

Subsequent amendments to the Minneapolis Civil Rights Ordinance extended civil rights protections, prohibiting discrimination in employment, labor organization membership, property rental and purchase agreements, lending, access to and use of public accommodations and public services, and membership in professional organizations. In addition, "redlining" - the practice of failing to offer access to mortgages, loans and insurance to residents of certain neighborhoods - and reprisals based on a person's association with individuals of other protected classes, filing a complaint, participating in an investigation or protesting discrimination in the workplace were made illegal. Finally, coercion regarding the exercise of real estate rights and the aiding and abetting of discrimination was proscribed.

In 1991, a new section was added providing for the registration of Domestic Partners with the Office of the City Clerk, and, in 1995, another amendment provided an option for parties to a case to voluntarily enter into mediation prior to the holding of a public hearing on the complaint.

Currently, the Minneapolis Civil Rights Ordinance enumerates human rights for all residents of the City of Minneapolis. It is one of the most comprehensive in the nation, prohibiting discrimination based on race, color, creed, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, age, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, or familial status. Equally important, the ordinance establishes mechanisms for implementing and enforcing the strict anti-discrimination

provisions. The Commission on Civil Rights can use their capacity as an advisory and adjudicative body to educate, persuade, conciliate, enforce, mediate, and adjudicate disputes in order to prevent and eliminate bias and discrimination on the basis of the listed classes.

### Mission of the Commission

- ❖ SEEK TO PREVENT AND ELIMINATE BIAS AND DISCRIMINATION IN THE CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS
- ❖ PROVIDE LEADERSHIP IN THE AREA OF CIVIL RIGHTS
- ❖ ENCOURAGE AND EDUCATE THE PUBLIC IN THE PROMOTION OF CIVIL RIGHTS
- ❖ IDENTIFY PRINCIPAL CIVIL RIGHTS CONCERNS OF THE COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND SET PRIORITIES AND OBJECTIVES
- ❖ ADVISE THE MAYOR, CITY COUNCIL, CITY AGENCIES AND DEPARTMENTS ON CIVIL RIGHTS MATTERS
- ❖ CONDUCT RESEARCH AND STUDIES TO BEST CARRY OUT THE OBJECTIVES OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ORDINANCE
- ❖ ADJUDICATE COMPLAINTS OF DISCRIMINATION OCCURRING IN THE CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS

## Section 2: Responsibilities & Functions

### Adjudicative Role

Following the investigation of a charge of discrimination by the Complaint Investigations Division (CID) of the Minneapolis Department of Civil Rights, the Director makes a final determination. If the case is Dismissed or determined as No Probable Cause, then the Complainant who originally filed the charge has the right to appeal the determination to the Minneapolis Commission on Civil Rights.

Upon appeal of a determination, the Commission Chairperson shall designate three (3) members of the Commission, at least two (2) of whom shall be lawyers<sup>1</sup>, to review the director's determination. These Commissioners serve on review panels. The Review Committee has the power to:

- Sustain the Division's determination, thereby closing the case;
- Reverse the Division's determination, thereby sending the case to conciliation;
- Remand the case back to the Division for further investigation only when aspects of the determination are deemed erroneous.

Either a non-oral hearing or an oral hearing is held when the Complainant appeals the Division's "Dismissal" or "No Probable Cause" determination. An oral hearing is granted if the Complainant has newly discovered material evidence that could not with reasonable diligence have earlier been made known to the Division. Otherwise, the Complainant will have their appeal decided at a non-oral hearing.

An oral hearing is similar to a contested case hearing. The newly discovered evidence will be presented at the hearing and any other relevant and admissible evidence. Then the appointed committee will issue a decision.

In a non-oral hearing, Commissioners review written statements from the Complainant and Respondent and make a decision based on the statements and the investigative file provided by the Division. Procedural rules for non-oral and oral hearings are included in Appendix C.

If the Complaint Investigations Division finds "Probable Cause" and the matter has not been settled through conciliation, the case is referred to the Commission on Civil Rights. Upon referral to the Commission, the chairperson shall designate three (3) persons to a Hearing Committee and conduct a Public Hearing in accordance with Chapter 14 of the Minnesota Statutes.

At the Public Hearing, the Committee makes written findings and issues an order to either dismiss the case or remedy the discrimination. The Hearing Committee has broad powers to remedy discrimination, such as: the ability to award damages, punitive damages, attorney fees, and other relief. Commission orders may be appealed for review by the Minnesota State Court of Appeals.

The review process provides the Complainant a neutral third-party review of the Division's decision. This ensures fairness to both parties. Therefore, when sitting on a review or hearing panel, it is important for Commissioners to remain neutral and unbiased in exercising their powers.

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<sup>1</sup> Minneapolis Civil Rights Ordinance defines "Lawyer" as: A person duly authorized and licensed by the State of Minnesota or any other state to engage in the practice of law.

## Advisory Role

The Commission serves in an advisory capacity to the Mayor, City Council, and City departments. Commissions recommend solutions, but do not have final decision-making authority to set governmental policy. When presenting recommendations to the Mayor, the Minneapolis City Council, or to a City department, keep the following essential points in mind:

- Provide recommendations in writing
- Express your ideas clearly and succinctly
- Propose solutions that are viable and cost effective
- Explain the reasons for the suggested changes
- Ensure that your advice has been approved by the full commission
- Ensure that your recommendations do not inadvertently conflict with current laws

As independent advisory bodies, commissions may take positions contrary to that of the Mayor, the City Council, or a City department. When this arises, notify your Commission Liaison or Commission Chair prior to making a public statement. This way the Commission and the governmental policy-makers are provided an opportunity to discuss the issue before releasing information to the public.

## Research, Study, and Public Forums

MCCR may conduct research on contemporary civil rights issues affecting Minneapolis residents. Commissioners work to gather data on the issue, hold public forums to address community concerns, publish the results of the study, and make recommendations on how to solve the civil right issues at hand.

Public forums are especially important because they allow community members affected by civil rights issues to have direct involvement in solving the issue. Community members can voice their opinions and provide information on the how civil rights issues affect their daily life. Forums also help to disseminate information to community members, government agencies and officials, and others who may not be aware of civil rights issues affecting their community.

When conducting research and study and when holding public forums, commissioners should keep in mind the overall mission and purpose of the Commission: to eliminate bias and discrimination in the City of Minneapolis. All actions the Commission takes should be understood and implemented within that context.

## Section 3: Structure

### Membership

As a Commissioner, you are one of twenty-one (21) members appointed to the Commission by the Mayor and the City Council. Commissioners must be residents<sup>2</sup> of Minneapolis and must be persons known to favor the principles of equity, non-discrimination and the objectives of the Minneapolis Civil Rights Ordinance.

### Elected Officer Positions

Once appointed, Commissioners may run for one (1) of four (4) elected officer positions:

#### Chair

The Chair is responsible for representing the Commission in its business before the Mayor, City Council, Department of Civil Rights, and community, in person and in correspondence. The Chair convenes and sets the agenda for all Executive Committee and Commission meetings. The Chair also appoints members to standing committees, assures processing of case hearings, and delegates tasks as necessary to assure that Commission work is accomplished.

#### Vice-Chair

The Vice-Chair assists the Chair in duties related to the Commission, as directed by the Chair and attends Executive Committee meetings. The Vice-Chair is also responsible for filling in for the Chair when the Chair is unavailable. The Vice-Chair is second in line to chair Commission meetings.

#### Treasurer

The Treasurer oversees the Commission's allocated funds, reports to the Commission on the Commission's finances, prepares and submits the Commission's annual budget to the Director of the Minneapolis Department of Civil Rights. The Treasurer also attends Executive Committee meetings, is third in line to chair Commission meetings.

#### Secretary

The Secretary takes notes and produces minutes from Commission and Executive Committee meetings to submit to the Commission Liaison for public distribution. The Secretary tracks attendance and records votes at Commission meetings, monitors the Commission email, and is fourth in line to chair Commission meetings.

### Executive Committee

The Executive Committee is comprised of the Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer, Secretary, and chairs of each standing committee. The Committee meets monthly to set an agenda for regular Commission meetings.

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<sup>2</sup> Minneapolis Civil Rights Ordinance, Chapter 141.20, Section (a) indicates that, "All members shall be residents of the city, unless the residency requirement is waived in accordance with Minneapolis Code of Ordinances Title 2, section 14.180."

## Standing Committees

There are four (4) standing committees in MCCR. As a Commissioner you will be a part of at least one (1) of the four (4) committees and will carry out the committee's responsibilities while serving. If you are an active-licensed attorney, you will automatically be placed on the Standards and Procedures committee.

### Contract Compliance (CC)

If you are a part of the Contract Compliance committee, you will:

- Support local small business in Minneapolis;
- Encourage minority- and women-owned businesses to contract with the City;
- Assist the Contract Compliance Division of the Department of Civil Rights.

### Engagement & Research (E&R)

If you are a part of the Engagement and Research committee, you will:

- Conduct research on contemporary civil rights issues facing residents of Minneapolis;
- Host Public Forums with the Minneapolis community;
- Develop policy recommendations for stakeholders regarding civil rights issues.

### Public Relations & Education (PR&E)

If you are a part of the Public Relations and Education committee, you will:

- Create and manage the Commission's public image throughout the City;
- Educate the public about the work of the Commission, civil rights protections, and the complaint filing process with the Department of Civil Rights;
- Manage the Commission's social media accounts;
- Create and update publicity materials for the Commission in collaboration with the Department of Civil Rights.

### Standards & Procedures (S&P)

If you are a part of the Standards and Procedures committee, you will:

- Monitor and revise internal and external standards, rules, and procedures of the Commission;
- Provide parliamentary guidance for Commission meetings.

## Section 4: Resources & Policies

Commissions by their nature are collaborative bodies. Therefore, it is important to use the resources available to you. In addition to your fellow Commissioners, there are many resources available to help you provide excellent service to the City of Minneapolis.

### Minneapolis Department of Civil Rights

One of your primary resources is the Minneapolis Department of Civil Rights (MDCR). MDCR is an Executive Department, which means that the MDCR Director reports directly to the Mayor.

#### Staff Divisions

MDCR is divided into five (5) divisions:

- Office of Police Conduct Review (OPCR)
- Contract Compliance Division (CCD)
- Complaint Investigations Division (CID)
- Civil Rights Equity Division (CRED)
- Labor Standards Enforcement Division (LSED)

#### Volunteer Commissions

There are three (3) Commissions that support the enforcement work of the Department of Civil Rights, including:

- Minneapolis Commission on Civil Rights (MCCR)
- Workforce Advisory Commission (WAC)
- Police Conduct Oversight Commission (PCOC)

#### Commission Liaison

MCCR has been assigned a Liaison from the Complaint Investigations Division who will be your primary contact with the Department of Civil Rights. The Liaison provides analytical and administrative support to help the Commission successfully complete their work. Your Liaison can help in the following ways:

- Assist with research on policy issues and legislative analysis
- Help develop and monitor annual reports
- Serve as a liaison with elected officials, City of Minneapolis departments, and community organizations
- Staff monthly meeting
- Draft correspondence
- Respond to requests directed to the Commission
- Assist in recruitment and nomination efforts

Other MDCR staff members may be available to assist with research, clarify an issue or policy, help organize an event or special project, make connections with other departments, or help in other ways to

ensure successful Commission work. This cooperative relationship is at the request of the Commission and is on a case-by-case basis.

## Media Contacts

News media outlets can be a valuable resource for the Commission. They can help you meet your obligation to inform the public about issues related to the Commission's mission. Anticipate when an event or issue will stir the interest of the media; it may be appropriate to send information packets or initiate contact with the media to take a proactive rather than a reactive stance. The Commission should maintain a cooperative and open relationship with the media. MDCR staff can provide background information and media contacts.

When working with the media it is important to:

- Designate a media spokesperson for the commission or for a specific issue
- Follow all established policies for media relations
- Focus on the commission's perspective, not individual opinions
- Refer the matter to the Director of the Department of Civil Rights if you feel uncomfortable or unsure answering a question

In communications with the media, every statement you make is a public, quotable statement. These statements may appear in the press and may be highlighted in other public arenas. Make sure your statements are accurate, unbiased, and represent the commission.

## Electronic Communication

MDCR maintains a website for the Commission. You should familiarize yourself with its contents and may submit updated web content when necessary. All suggested changes or additions to web content should be coordinated with your Liaison.

On the website, you will have access to:

- Commission's calendar: <http://www.minneapolismn.gov/CommissionCalendar>
- Commission's meeting agendas: <http://www.minneapolismn.gov/meetings/civilrights/index.htm?timeRange=2015>
- Commission's meeting minutes: <http://www.minneapolismn.gov/meetings/proceedings/index.htm?nx=1012&proYear=2015>

The Commission routinely uses email to communicate amongst each other and with the public. The Commission has a public email: [mccr@minneapolismn.gov](mailto:mccr@minneapolismn.gov). Emails will be provided to commissioners during any of the Commission/Committees meetings.

Correspondence can also be mailed to: Commission on Civil Rights, care of Commission Liaison, at 350 S. 5th St - Room 239 - Minneapolis, MN 55415. Copies will be distributed at the next Commission meeting.

All commission related e-mails that are sent and received, even on your personal computer or account, are subject to Open Meeting Law. Therefore, it is important to carbon copy the Commission Liaison to

any Commission emails circulating to a majority or quorum of the Commission or any subcommittee members so they can ensure Open Meeting Law is being followed.

### Other Resources

The City Council's membership list, agendas, and informational material can be found on the council website: [www.minneapolismn.gov/council/index.htm](http://www.minneapolismn.gov/council/index.htm)

The Mayor's website, [www.minneapolismn.gov/mayor/index.htm](http://www.minneapolismn.gov/mayor/index.htm), contains the Mayor's office news, lists the Mayor's priorities, and identifies key staff.

If you have a question about ethics, contact the Ethical Practices Board at 612-673-3230 or [EthicsOfficer@minneapolis.gov](mailto:EthicsOfficer@minneapolis.gov).

The City Attorney's Office can answer legal questions such as questions about Open Meeting Law or the Data Practices Act; ask your Liaison for the appropriate contact for your commission. More information about city services and departments can be found on the website: [www.minneapolismn.gov/index.htm](http://www.minneapolismn.gov/index.htm)

## Section 5: Laws & Regulations

### Minneapolis Civil Rights Ordinance

The Commission was established under and is governed by Minneapolis Civil Rights Ordinances (MCRO), Chapter 141. The rules and procedures outlined in this handbook are consistent with the ordinance. As a Commissioner, it is important to read and understand the Minneapolis Civil Rights Ordinance so you can carry out your duties consistent with the law's purpose and parameters. The ordinance is included in Appendix A, as amended February 2018.

### Ethics in Government

Commissioners must uphold high ethical standards established by Minnesota Code of Ordinances Title 2, Chapter 15, Ethics in Government. It is important that Commissioners avoid conflicts of interest or the appearance of conflict of interest, and that the Commission adopts policies and procedures to ensure their advisory status and independence. The Ethics in Government statute sets standards of conduct to ensure that public employees and commissioners perform their duties in the public interest.

As a Commissioner, you are required to:

- Disclose conflicts of interest
- Exercise your judgment and carry out your duties in a way that would further the best interests of the City of Minneapolis
- Refrain from participating in decisions in which you have a financial or personal interest
- Refrain from using your position to gain privileges or special treatment, including using public and government property for private or personal purposes
- Refrain from soliciting or accepting gifts from individuals who have a personal or financial interest in a Commission decision
- Report evidences of fraud, theft, embezzlement, or other unlawful use of public funds or property
- Refrain from disclosing any proprietary information or disclosing information in way that would violate your duty to the Data Practices Act (see below)
- Avoid bias or favoritism when making decisions

Commissioners can avoid a conflict of interest by following statutory restrictions, using good judgment, being fair at all times, and maintaining an appearance of fairness. If you perceive a potential conflict of interest while serving as a Commissioner, bring this to the attention of your Liaison right away.

The City of Minneapolis Ethical Practices Board (EPB) can also discuss concerns with you and suggest alternative actions to take. You can request an advisory opinion about ethical standards or conflicts of interest.

## Open Meeting Law

The Open Meeting Law is a statutory law found in Minnesota Statutes Chapter 13D that imposes certain requirements on public bodies when holding meetings. The purpose of the law is to promote openness in governmental proceedings ensuring that the interested public has the opportunity to be fully informed and has the opportunity to present its views.

A meeting is subject to the Open Meeting Law if the following elements are present:

- A gathering of a quorum or more members. A quorum is typically a majority of members of the Commission but can also be a majority of members in one of the committees, task forces, review committees, or hearing committees.
- A body subject to the Open Meeting Law in which members discuss, decide, or receive information as a group or those discussions, decisions, or information are related to the official business of that body.

If any of these elements are not present, then the meeting is not subject to the Open Meeting Law. The Minneapolis Commission on Civil Rights, and its committees, task forces, review committees and hearing committees, are subject to the Open Meeting Law.

With technology advancements, meetings that are subject to the Open Meeting Law may not look like traditional, in-person meetings. For example, an email conversation among a majority of Commissioners discussing information related to civil rights in Minneapolis would qualify as a meeting under the Open Meeting Law. So, the adage 'it's better safe than sorry' is applicable here. Courts tend to decide Open Meeting Law cases in the public's favor; therefore, it is better to make public any gathering or conversation discussing Commission business whenever possible to avoid unintentional violations of the Open Meeting Law.

Because the Minneapolis Commission on Civil Rights is a public body subject to the Open Meeting Law, as a Commissioner, you need to make sure the meetings held by the Commission and by its committees, task forces, review committees, and hearing committees are consistent with the Open Meeting Law. Under the Open Meeting Law, meetings must generally be open to the public and proper notice must be provided regarding the meetings.

Most Commission meetings must be open to the public. There are a few exceptions to having a meeting open, such as to discuss potential settlement of a case against the Commission with the Commission's attorney. However, these exceptions will rarely occur for Commission meetings.

Notice of public meetings must be provided to the public. Notice of public meetings can be provided in two ways: (1) through a schedule of meetings; or (2) through a "special meeting" notice. The Commission Liaison will assist in these processes.

The first way to provide notice is to have a schedule of the regular meetings of the Commission, committee, or task force, on file with the MDCR that includes the date, time and location of the meeting to be held.

The second way to provide notice is to provide notice of a "special meeting." A special meeting notice must comply with the following:

1. A special meeting notice must include the date, time, location and specific purpose of the meeting. The specific purpose must state more than that the business of the Commission/committee/task force will be discussed; it must list the specific subjects that will be discussed at the meeting. Only those subjects that are listed on the special meeting notice can be discussed at the meeting.
2. A special meeting notice must be placed, at least 3 days before the meeting, on the door of the Commission's (if a Commission meeting) or the committee's (if a committee meeting) or the task force's (if a task force meeting) usual meeting room.
3. A special meeting notice must be mailed or otherwise delivered at least three days before the meeting to each person who has filed a written request for notice of special meetings of the Commission, committee, or task force, or a subject to be discussed at the special meeting, whichever is applicable.

Emergency meetings are an exception to the 3-day notice rule. Emergency meetings are special meetings called because of circumstances that require immediate consideration by the public body. However, time constraints alone are not sufficient for a meeting to qualify as an emergency meeting. Emergency situations should be used rarely and for circumstances where public safety is jeopardized. Examples of emergency situations would include holding a meeting to respond to a natural disaster, a health epidemic, or a disaster caused by humans such as a train derailment or explosion.

A Commission meeting may only be conducted by telephone when all of the following requirements are met:

- Health pandemic or emergency declared by Governor, Mayor or Chair of County Board of Commissioners
- All members can hear one another and all discussions
- Generally, at least one member must be in the meeting room
- All votes are conducted by roll call
- Compliance with specific statutory notice requirements for telephonic meetings

At least one copy of the following printed materials must be available for public inspection at a meeting, unless the data is "not public" data:

- Material distributed at the meeting to all members of the governing body;
- Material distributed before the meeting to all members; and
- Material available in the meeting room to all members.

At a meeting, the vote of each Commissioner must be recorded so that the individual vote of each Commissioner can be determined, except when the vote relates to payments of judgments, claims and amounts fixed by statute. The recording of the votes can be done by placement into a journal, or more commonly, into meeting minutes.

### [Minnesota Government Data Practices Act](#)

The Government Data Practices Act found in Minnesota Statutes Chapter 13 creates a presumption that state and local government records are accessible to the public, unless a state statute, federal law, or

temporary classification provides otherwise. Data covered by the Act are all forms of information collected, created, received, maintained, or disseminated by government.

The Government Data Practices Act contains many of the rules for when state and local government records are not accessible to the public. The Act also contains:

- Procedures for government agencies to follow in collecting and keeping records
- Procedures for individuals to follow in inspecting and copying government records
- Special protections for individuals who are being asked to supply information about themselves, seeking to obtain government records on themselves, or wishing to correct erroneous government data about themselves
- Procedures for getting advisory opinions on access to government data
- Civil and administrative remedies and criminal penalties for violating the act

As a Commissioner you should make sure to consult and follow the Government Data Practices Act provisions when any record is produced by the Commission. Your Commission Liaison can help with any questions regarding the Data Practices Act.

### [Americans with Disabilities Act](#)

The Americans with Disabilities Act sets criteria for accessibility and accommodation. Under the ADA, people who have disabilities have a right to an equal opportunity for effective participation in Commission activities, whether as Commissioners or members of the public.

Meetings and other Commission activities should be held in wheelchair accessible locations with accessible restrooms nearby. Qualified sign language interpreters, materials in accessible format such as Braille, large print, audio recording, or other aids for effective communication should be provided upon request. Reasonable modifications in policies and procedures should be made whenever they create a barrier to full and equal participation of a person with a disability. All advertising for meetings and events should include a telephone number and email address for requesting information and accommodations.

### [Minnesota Administrative Procedures Act](#)

The Minnesota Administrative Procedures Act found in Minnesota Statutes Chapter 14 is a useful tool to use when drafting, revising, or updating the rules and procedures of the Commission. Since the Commission is a local body and not a state body, it is not technically bound by the Act. However, many of the guidelines and procedures are applicable to the Commission and the Act should be used as a resource when relevant.

### [Other Restrictions and Requirements](#)

The following restrictions and requirements affect you during the time you serve as a Commissioner:

- Commissioners must abide by their commission's bylaws, policies and procedures.

- Commissioners must not make unilateral decisions or take action without the consent of the commission as a whole.
- Commissioners must ensure that they are not misinterpreted as speaking on behalf of the commission when they lack authorization.
- Commissions exist to serve the public, so it is not appropriate to use commissioner status for a personal platform.
- Use of municipal funds, equipment, or services such as photocopying and telephone is restricted for only commission business.
- Questions or concerns about commission issues are best directed to the Commission Liaison or the Minneapolis Department of Civil Rights Director, who will make sure all Commissioners receive full information in a timely manner.

## Section 6: Duties & Responsibilities

### Participate Effectively

One of the fundamental responsibilities of any Commissioner is to stay informed about current issues, legislative activities, and laws that affect the work of the commission and those whom it serves. This makes your services to the community more responsive and effective.

Secondly, come prepared and actively participate in commission meetings. Active participation in meetings by all Commissioners ensures that diverse perspectives are included in decision-making. The bylaws of each commission define attendance requirements. A Commissioner may forfeit his or her position on the commission as a result of poor attendance.

In addition, effective service as a Commissioner means that you:

- Devote time outside of commission meetings for research, analysis, outreach, meetings, or other activities as needed
- Focus on serving the public interest when making recommendations
- Be willing to take sides in a controversy and weather criticism
- Cooperate with other Commissioners to effectuate the decisions made by the Commission as a body – adhere to the democratic process
- Communicate with members of the public, the Liaison, other Commissioners, and others in government
- Accept leadership opportunities consistent with your availability and competencies
- Develop a questioning attitude toward commission procedures and maintain openness to continual improvement

### Meeting Attendance

Since the effectiveness of the Commission depends on participation of the Commissioners, attendance at meetings is essential. Therefore, the Commission has an attendance policy to ensure Commissioners make attending meetings a priority.

The Commission holds regular meetings once a month for a total of twelve meetings a year. Any Commissioner who has four (4) unexcused absences from the Commission's monthly meetings will automatically forfeit their membership on the Commission.

Commissioners approaching the four absences deadline for regular Commission meetings and/or standing committee meetings will be notified by the Chair of the Commission.

### Task Forces and Working Groups

The Commission has the power to appoint Commissioner's to Task Forces and Working Groups to conduct research on contemporary civil rights issues affecting Minneapolis. Both Task Forces and

Working Groups function like the Standing Committees but are designed to focus on a specific civil rights issues.

Task Forces are created when the Commission can complete its recommendations and work on the issue within a year. Task Forces are task oriented and are usually created to achieve a directed goal. Working Groups on the other hand, tackle larger issues that need more research and study. There won't necessarily be a defined task to complete and the Commission may need longer than a year to complete its recommendations and work on the issue.

### Public Forum

When a civil rights issue that the Commission, a Working Group or Task Force, is working on affects the community at large, the Commission may choose to hold a public forum to hear community voices share their thoughts on how to solve the issue. The public forums are designed to facilitate a conversation between the Commission, policy makers, community organizers, and the general public in order to tackle the civil rights issue from all perspectives, thus reaching a solution that benefits the most amount of people and organizations as possible.

The format of public forums is dependent on the issue and the Commissioners planning the forum, but it is common to have a moderator ask prepared questions to a panel of policy makers, community organizers, and scholarly experts, and then open the floor for community discussion with community attendees.

### Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Contest

Historically, the Public Relations and Education Committee runs an annual essay contest with the Minneapolis Public School system. Specific grade levels are given the opportunity to submit a piece that responds to a prompt related to Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and civil rights issues. The Commission chooses winners who then receive a modest scholarship.

The purpose of the program is to promote awareness and understanding of civil rights issues at a young age to ensure that future generations are engaged and interested in issues that affect the rights of people in their communities.