

Robbinsdale Human Rights Commission – Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

Date: Saturday, July 6, 2025

Time: 1:00 PM

Location: Manor Park

Attendees: 4

Julie Ralston-Aoki (Chair, HRC)

Courtney Kirkeeng (Vice Chair, HRC)

Amy Sutton (community member)

Shannon McIntosh (community member)

Discussion Summary:

The subcommittee convened to continue its review of the proposed tenting ordinance and strategize next steps regarding our advisory role to City Council. Key points included:

- The group emphasized that the intent is *not to defeat* but to *impact* policy change by developing informed recommendations to present to the City Council. This aligns with the scope assigned by the Human Rights Commission.
- Courtney is following up with Tim and Captain Elder on the status of the June 10th data request related to unhoused individuals in Robbinsdale. Fulfillment of this request may help determine whether such an ordinance is even necessary in city code.
- Courtney is reaching out to a local subject matter expert to either attend the July 15th City Council meeting or submit a written statement of perspective.
- Julie and Courtney are working on drafting a proposed alternative policy and a memorandum to accompany or amend the current draft, should it move forward.
- A broader exploration of policy context included referencing encampment policies in other Twin Cities communities, including St. Paul's approach to property handling and support through its COAST Team. Julie referenced a city policy that requires photographing and securing displaced property, and we discussed comparing this to Robbinsdale's approach.
- The subcommittee discussed key questions:
 - Is this truly an issue in Robbinsdale?
 - Do our leaders actually intend to remove unhoused individuals from the city?
 - Instead of criminalizing or pushing people out, the city should be asking: *Where did someone stay? Did we offer help? Were they supported in a way that*

respected dignity and need?

- Not everyone is able or willing to accept services, and reasons vary beyond addiction—such as storage of belongings, family separations, or previous shelter experiences.
- The ordinance in its current form is perceived as primarily a tool to displace individuals without addressing root causes or offering meaningful alternatives. It would allow the city to discard people's personal property and move them out of public spaces.
- The group raised logistical and ethical considerations:
 - Should police be required to offer assistance?
 - Should social workers be automatically contacted?
 - What happens if shelters are full?
 - What about harsh weather, such as winter conditions?
 - How over-capacity is the current embedded social worker?
 - Should assistance be offered more than once (a "three-strike" rule)?
 - How long would the city store personal items? How will they be tagged and tracked?
- The subcommittee believes the city should make space to hear from subject matter experts before enacting such a policy. Potential references include Avivo, Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid, and other legal or service organizations.
- Questions were also raised about the effectiveness of fines in these situations and whether those penalties contribute to real solutions.
- Julie suggested that even if the ordinance moves forward, a memorandum could be added with recommended amendments, or language could be added to commit to immediate post-adoption changes.
- A Duluth legal aid letter regarding a similar ordinance may be a helpful reference—particularly its emphasis on shelter access and due process.
- We also discussed allowing time windows (such as 72 hours) for outreach and solutions before enforcement, and implementing protections for personal items.

- The Minneapolis framework for encampment engagement was noted as a reference, including a checklist of actions and reporting requirements.

Action Items:

- Courtney to follow up on the June 10th data request with Tim and Captain Elder.
- Courtney to contact a local subject matter expert to attend or provide input for the July 15th City Council meeting.
- Julie and Courtney to continue drafting a proposed alternative policy and supporting memorandum.
- Courtney to reach out to Joanna to request an email be sent to the full HRC, asking who is available to attend the July 15th City Council meeting.
- Research legal aid letters and related ordinances from Duluth and Minneapolis for reference.