

ORDINANCE NO. 8-2025

AN ORDINANCE OF THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF VALPARAISO, INDIANA, AMENDING VALPARAISO MUNICIPAL CODE SECTIONS 38.01, 38.02, 38.03, AND 38.04, CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A HUMAN RELATIONS COUNCIL WITHIN THE CITY OF VALPARAISO, INDIANA

WHEREAS, the Common Council of the City of Valparaiso, Indiana, adopted Ordinance 19-2011 on June 27, 2011 creating a Mayoral Advisory Human Relations Council (“AHRC”). Ordinance 19-2011 was later amended by Ordinance 29-2011 on October 10, 2011 and Ordinance 3-2020 on March 30, 2020;

WHEREAS, said Ordinance and Amendments have been codified in Valparaiso Municipal Code Sections 38.01 through 38.04;

WHEREAS, the Common Council of the City of Valparaiso, Indiana (the “Council”), remains committed to creating a nondiscriminatory environment within the City by promoting a better understanding, along with an appreciation for the general societal benefits that accrue from being intentionally inclusive of the diverse body of the citizens of Valparaiso;

WHEREAS, the most efficient and effective way to accomplish this goal is to ensure a Human Relations Council (“HRC”) works in coordination with an elected body whose diverse perspectives will strengthen the goals, initiatives, and directives given to the HRC in furtherance of its purpose;

WHEREAS, the Council now deems it appropriate and necessary to amend such Code Sections to enhance the purpose and practices commonly associated with and charged of a HRC.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Common Council of the City of Valparaiso, that Sections 38.01, 38.02, 38.03 and 38.04 of the Valparaiso Municipal Code should be and are hereby amended as follows:

SECTION 38.01 PURPOSE

The purpose of this chapter is to establish a Human Relations Council (“HRC”) responsible for providing advice and assistance to the Common Council (“Council”) in areas including the following:

- (A) Advising the Council on the status of human relations in the city and identifying special needs or opportunities to enhance those relations.
- (B) Acting as a resource to the Council when discriminatory incidents occur, including but not limited to those prohibited in Section 130.12 (A) – (C) of the Valparaiso Municipal Code.
- (C) Suggesting convening of events designed to promote a better understanding between all Valparaiso’s citizens and improve the community’s acceptance of diversity.

- (D) Serving as a liaison between the elected officials and protected classes as delineated in the Human Rights Ordinance.
- (E) Forward any complaints received pursuant to Ordinance 9-2016, commonly referred to as the Valparaiso Human Relations Ordinance, to the City Attorney and the Investigations and Reconciliation Committee for investigation and resolution.

SECTION 38.02 MEMBERSHIP OF THE HUMAN RELATIONS COUNCIL.

The Valparaiso Human Relations Council shall be composed of nine (9) voting members, six (6) of whom shall be appointed by the Council, and three (3) of whom shall be appointed by the Mayor. Members shall serve without compensation and shall provide recommendations to the Council on matters related to community human relations.

SECTION 38.03 ORGANIZATION OF THE HUMAN RELATIONS COUNCIL

- (A) In making appointments to the HRC, the appointing authority shall consider the individual's sensitivity and awareness to human relations matters affecting the community. The HRC membership shall reflect the diversity of community and shall include representation from all major sectors of the community, including business and labor, non-profit organizations, education, government, and the faith community.
- (B) Except as noted below, members shall serve terms of three (3) years commencing on January 1 and until reappointed or a successor is appointed. As to the existing members, appointments and terms shall be handled as follows:
 1. Within thirty (30) days from the date of the adoption of this chapter, all currently serving members of the AHRC shall notify the Council, in writing, of their intent to either continue serving on the HRC or provide written notice of their intent to vacate their position.
 2. Any vacancies that exist as of the date of the adoption of this chapter or which are created under subsection (B)(1) shall be filled by appointment of the Council by majority vote and shall serve through December 31, 2025.
 3. Beginning January 1, 2026, appointments shall be made as follows:
 - a. Two (2) members shall be appointed by Council and serve until December 31, 2027;
 - b. One (1) member shall be appointed by the Mayor and serve until December 31, 2027;
 - c. Two (2) members shall be appointed by Council and serve until December 31, 2028;
 - d. One (1) member shall be appointed by the Mayor and serve until December 31, 2028;
 - e. Two (2) members shall be appointed by Council and serve until December 31, 2029;
 - f. One (1) member shall be appointed by the Mayor and serve until December 31, 2029;
 4. The Valparaiso Police Chief shall serve as a nonvoting member.
 5. One (1) member of the City Council shall serve as a nonvoting member.

6. The Mayor and the Council may each appoint one (1) nonvoting member who is a full-time high school or college student and who resides in Valparaiso. The terms of these nonvoting members shall be for one year starting January 1.
7. Upon adoption of this section, the Council shall issue appropriate written appointments identifying which current members are assigned to the HRC and the expiration of their remaining term.
8. Should the Mayor waive or fail to exercise any or all appointments, the power of appointment shall pass to the Council to fill the vacant appointments.

(C) Members may be reappointed for consecutive terms; however, no members shall serve more than three (3) consecutive terms commencing January 1, 2026.

(D) At the first HRC meeting of each year, the HRC shall select a Chairperson and a Vice-Chairperson from its members. The Chairperson shall be the primary contact person between the Council and HRC.

(E) Notwithstanding vacancies outlined in Section (B)(2), should a vacancy arise on the HRC, the original appointing body shall appoint a person to complete the remaining portion of the current term.

(F) The original appointing body may remove any member of the HRC for cause including the failure of the member to attend three consecutive HRC meetings or an actual conflict of interest.

SECTION 38.04 MEETINGS.

(A) The Human Relations Council shall meet with the Council within forty-five (45) days following adoption of this Ordinance to identify human relation matters of concern to the Council. The Council may assign to the HRC tasks and responsibilities related to human relation matters and may seek the counsel and advice of the HRC on these matters. Upon the request of the Council, the HRC may pursue identification of specific barriers to equal opportunity and ways to address these barriers. The HRC may be requested to serve as a resource to the Mayor and Council when incidents motivated by bigotry and/or intolerance occur or when there is a need for a liaison between the Mayor's Office, City Council, and Valparaiso citizens. The Council may also use the HRC as a voice on behalf of those members of the community who believe that they are disadvantaged because of their membership in a historically disadvantaged group and the HRC may be requested to identify means of informing the community through communication about the benefits of diversity and the harm of exclusion. In addition, the HRC may identify matters for consideration without a request from the Council.

(B) The HRC shall meet at least quarterly each year and as needed or requested by the Council. It shall report its activities, findings, and recommendations to the Council.

PASSED by the Common Council of the City of Valparaiso, Indiana, by a ____ - ____ vote of all members present and voting on this ____ day of _____, 2025.

Jon Costas, Mayor

Attest:

Holly Taylor, Clerk-Treasurer

Presented to me by the Mayor of Valparaiso, Indiana, this _____ day of _____, 2025 at the hour of _____ o'clock am/pm.

Holly Taylor, Clerk-Treasurer

This Ordinance was approved and signed by me this _____ day of _____, 2025 at the hour of _____ o'clock am/pm.

Jon Costas, Mayor