DIVISION 2. HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Sec. 50-61. Establishment and Purpose

The purposes of this division are:

1) To define the purpose of the Medford Human Rights Commission (or "Commission"), an advisory Commission, as upholding and promoting the human rights and civil rights of all persons in the City of Medford; and

2) To define the composition, powers, and scope of responsibility of the Commission.

3) To establish a policy to uphold the human rights of all persons in the City of Medford, and the free exercise and enjoyment of any rights and privileges secured by the Constitution and laws of the United States and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This policy shall provide that each person, regardless of protected classes under state and federal law, including, race, color, religious creed, military status, national origin, citizenship, immigration status, sex, age, genetic information, disability, ancestry, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, veteran status, gender identity, gender expression, or economic status as a person who is a recipient of federal, state or local housing subsidies, shall have equal opportunity in or access to employment, housing, education, and public accommodations; to ensure each person has equal access to and benefit from all public services and licensing; to help protect each person in the enjoyment of individual civil rights; and encourage and bring about mutual understanding and respect among all people by striving to improve the quality of life in the City and by the elimination of unlawful discrimination under state and federal law.

4) Support and uphold state and federal anti-discrimination laws, such as Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, which remains in effect and prohibits discrimination, G.L. c. 151B, and human rights as outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In instances where previous discriminatory practice or usage tends, on grounds set forth in paragraph (3) of this section, to exclude individuals from participation in, to deny them the benefits of, or to subject them to discrimination under any program or activity to which this policy applies, the Commission shall make good faith efforts to develop remedial measures to remove or overcome the consequences of the any prior discriminatory practice or usage, to accomplish the purposes of this policy. Even in the absence of such prior discrimination, the Commission shall, prospectively strive to ensure unbiased, fair and neutral treatment of all people in the City and the elimination of discrimination

that has limited their access, opportunities and participation in employment, housing, education, and public accommodation based on protected classes under state or federal law.

Sec. 50-62. Membership; appointment; term; removal; organization.

(a) The Medford Human Rights Commission shall consist of eleven members who reside in the city. Appointments should be made in accordance with the purpose stated in Sec. 50-61. Three members shall be appointed by the Mayor, and three members shall be appointed by the City Council. The City Council shall appoint the balance of the members upon recommendation from the MHRC, who shall create a list of recommended individuals from other appropriate City commissions and community-based organizations, such as but not limited to the Disabilities Commission and the Council on Aging. One of these individuals shall be a resident from the Medford Housing Authority.

(b) The Commission shall be reflective of the demographic population of Medford. Such demographic backgrounds may include applicants' racial, gender, religious, socioeconomic, cultural, immigrant, and neighborhood backgrounds, as well as a range of professional and lived experiences—including those shaped by discrimination, marginalization, or systemic barriers.

(c) All commissioners shall be appointed for a term of three years. Members may serve up to two consecutive terms and are not prohibited from serving additional terms provided they take a year off from serving.
However, the initial appointments to the Commission shall serve for the following terms:

(i) Three members shall serve for a one-year term.

(ii) Four members shall serve for a two-year term.

(iii) Four members shall serve for a three-year term.

(d) A vacancy occurring other than by expiration of a term shall be filled for the unexpired term in the same manner as the original appointment as defined by item (a) above.

(e) All members of the Commission shall receive compensation of $1250 each year. In addition, reasonable per diem and necessary expense reimbursement to MHRC commissioners and volunteers shall be paid out of the budget of the Commission.

(f) MHRC members may be removed only for cause by a 2/3 vote of the Commission, including for unexcused absences that exceed 25 percent of the number of meetings of the committee held within a 12-month period. The City Council may request the removal of their own appointees for cause by a majority vote of the City Council, and the Mayor may request the removal of their own appointees for cause.

(g) All MHRC members shall receive training on the purpose and obligations of the MHRC as stated in Sec. 50-61, meeting operations, parliamentary procedures, and legal obligations.

Sec. 50-63. Officers.

(a) The Commission shall elect officers annually at the start of a new term. Officers shall consist of the chair, vice-chair, and clerk. Officers may be elected to serve for one additional consecutive term. The Commission may also adopt procedural rules and regulations, and establish any subcommittees it deems appropriate. Those appointed by the MHRC to serve on MHRC subcommittees need not be MHRC members.

(b) The Chair shall preside at all meetings of the MHRC, regulate its proceedings and shall decide all questions of order. The MHRC may question the ruling of the Chair and vote to overrule their ruling. The Chair shall have the same powers to vote upon all measures coming before the city council as any other member of the MHRC.

(c) The Chair shall set meeting agendas in consultation with the Vice Chair and the assigned City staff person or City Council liaison.

(d) The Chair shall organize a meeting at the start of the term to set goals for the MHRC in line with the purposes and obligations as stated in Sec. 50-61.

(e) The Vice Chair shall support the Chair in the performance of the Chair's duties and shall assume these duties in the Chair's absence.

(f) The Clerk shall record or delegate the recording of minutes of MHRC meetings and work to make minutes other than from Executive Sessions available to the public in a timely fashion.

(g) The Officers shall work jointly to oversee financial procedures; prepare and implement a responsible budget; keep and preserve accurate financial records; and ensure timely payment of financial obligations.

(h) The Commission shall fill vacancies of officer positions as soon as possible. The Vice-Chair shall assume the responsibilities of the Chair if the chair is vacant until a new Chair is elected.

Sec. 50-64. Meetings; Quorum.

(a) The commission shall schedule at least eight meetings per year at regular intervals. The chair may call additional meetings as needed to carry out the Commission's responsibilities.

(b) A majority of sitting members shall constitute a quorum.

Sec. 50-65. Independence; Resources; Counsel.

(a) The City Solicitor shall serve as counsel of the commission. The commission shall have adequate access to counsel through the City staff person.

(b) The Mayor shall assign a qualified City employee to provide staffing support to the Commission. This person will ensure legal postings of meetings, carry out administrative and program tasks in support of decisions made by the Commission, organize training for members, facilitate the availability of necessary office and other resources to the Commission, and act as a liaison between the Commission and the Mayor.

(c) The MHRC shall have a budget line in the City's annual budget, which shall be funded at a level adequate for the Commission to perform its duties.

(d) The assigned City staff shall prepare and submit a proposed budget to the mayor to assist the commission in accomplishing its purpose herein upon the recommendation of the MHRC.

Sec. 50-66. Roles, Powers, and Duties.

The MHRC shall have four major essential roles in its efforts to protect and promote human rights in Medford:

(a) Community Education/Engagement: The MHRC shall educate the community and engage residents in defending and promoting human rights in Medford, utilizing such tools as public forums, training, and community conversations.

(b) Advisor to the City of Medford: The MHRC shall assist and advise the City on matters pertaining to the human rights of City residents and employees. To this end, the Commission shall, at the minimum:

(i) Review and discuss human and civil rights issues with the City administration and other City bodies and make recommendations necessary to protect the human rights of all City residents and employees.

(ii) Request periodic reports quarterly from the Office of Equity and Inclusion regarding data on human rights complaints in the City. Such information shall be anonymized and redacted where appropriate.

(iii) Request periodic annual reports from the City administration detailing employment diversity efforts and employees' self-reported race/ethnicity, disability status, gender identity, age, and length of employment, broken down by municipal departments based on data collected.

(iv) Request that the City administration and/or City Council collect demographic data needed for the MHRC to conduct its duties with tables or maps from available sources, showing, but not limited to, the following:

a. Population by age
b. City neighborhoods with median age
c. Population by race/ethnicity
d. Neighborhoods by race/ethnicity
e. Traffic stops by race/ethnicity
f. Profile of public school students
g. Voting Wards/Precincts
h. An analysis of access to public transportation by neighborhood

(c) Policy Advocacy - The MHRC shall be empowered to advocate for laws, policies, and practices that support human rights and improve social equity in the name of the MHRC. They may also submit resolutions for City Council and mayoral approval which

advocate for laws, policies, and practices that support human rights and improve social equity at the state and federal levels. Advocacy should address not only traditional forms of discrimination but also the cultural and systemic issues that put segments of our community at a disadvantage, even at risk. The MHRC shall also be empowered to evaluate with a human rights lens the full range of laws, practices, and policies that might have an impact on human rights in Medford and beyond.

(d) Research and Reporting - In order to have reliable and up-to-date data on human rights issues, the MHRC should gather and request the following information from city, state, and other sources, and compile, analyze, synthesize, and disseminate to the community in the form of reports, at minimum annually. The following list shall not be exhaustive and all requested information from the City shall be provided in a timely manner.

Data on human rights complaints filed with the City and their disposition

Data on police stops

Data on the percentage of affordable housing

Data regarding City hiring

While the MHRC is not herein given enforcement powers per se, it may at its discretion review discrimination allegations brought to its attention and consult with counsel to review.

Nothing in this Ordinance shall be read to conflict with state and federal law. All data requested or received shall comply with applicable local, state, and federal confidentiality and data privacy laws, and shall be aggregated or anonymized where necessary.

Sec. 50-67. Severability

The provisions in this ordinance are severable. If any part or provision of this ordinance, or the application of this ordinance to any person or circumstance, is held invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, the remainder of this ordinance shall not be affected by such holding and shall continue to have full force and effect.