



CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION AGENDA:

March 14, 2024

Municipal Building 15 South College Ave. Oxford, Ohio 45056 Second Floor Conference Room

4:00 PM

Approval of Agenda

Approval of Minutes

1. Minutes from the September 8, 2022, meeting.

Old Business

1. None.

New Business

1. Introduction and Welcome of New Member Suzanne Zazycki
2. Discussion of Complaint Received on January 12, 2024 and Withdrawn on February 14, 2024
3. Discussion of EEOC and Enforcement of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) Employment Discrimination
4. Role of City of Oxford Civil Rights Commission

Adjournment



MINUTES:

Date: September 8, 2022

Location: Municipal Building Second Floor Conference Room

Time of Meeting: 4:00 pm

Members present: Rebecca Howard, Gretchen Ziolkowski, and Cathryn Loucas

Staff present: Doug Elliott, City Manager/Director, and Heather Barbour, Clerk, of Council

Public present: Ann Fuehrer, Linda Simmons, Kathy McMahon-Klosterman members of the OCPJ and OHN, and Jillian Inks, Oxford Observer

Old Business: None

New Business:

A regular meeting of the Civil Rights Commission was called to order by Director Doug Elliott on Thursday, September 8, 2022, at 4:03 pm. Mr. Elliott welcomed new members and started with a round of introductions. Mr. Elliott then gave a brief history and background of the CRC, and its charge.

Mr. Elliott referenced Ordinance No. 3634 and Oxford Codified Ordinance Section 541.08, Entitled "Ethnic Intimidation." Mr. Elliott noted the updated language adopted by City Council on September 7, 2021. A copy of Ordinance No. 3634 is attached.

The guest speaker, Ms. Fuehrer of the Oxford Homelessness Network, began her presentation by passing out handouts. Ms. Fuehrer provided background information on what the OHN has been doing and acknowledged the efforts being made by the City. Ms. Fuehrer posed the question of Homelessness being a Civil Rights issue and wished to start an open conversation on the topic. Ms. Fuehrer remarked on what other Cities are doing, like Huston, TX. Ms. Inks mentioned efforts being made in Hamilton, Ohio, with programs like Serve City. Ms. Ziolkowski asked what the City does when a complaint is filed regarding a homeless issue. Mr. Elliott answered and noted the recent hire of the new Social Services Liaison, Ms. Ashlea Weddle, and how this new role might impact the situation. Ms. Fuehrer met with Ms. Weddle and Chief Jones to discuss possible rescore gaps. Ms. Howard brought up concerns with Nimbysism and pocket communities. Ms. Howard also noted that Oxford also has many residents who are economically fragile. Ms. Loucas asked if the public was aware of the situation and how the commission could put a spotlight on the issue. Ms. Loucas mentioned education and how the Commission might help with that. Ms. Simmons shared that she has been collecting the stories of the homeless to educate and raise awareness of their experiences with the community. Ms. Simmons mentioned that Cincinnati has a newspaper that homeless people write and sell to provide income.



Ms. Inks suggested that these collected stories be added to the Miami Summer Reading Program. Mr. Elliott thanked Ms. Fuehrer for her presentation.

Adjournment: 5:18 pm

Motion: Ms. Loucas

2nd: Ms. Howard

Vote: 3-0-0

ORDINANCE NO. 3634

AN ORDINANCE BY OXFORD CITY COUNCIL REPEALING THE CURRENT SECTION 541.08 "ETHNIC INTIMIDATION" OF THE CODIFIED ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF OXFORD AND ENACTING A NEW SECTION 541.08 "ETHNIC INTIMIDATION" OF THE CODIFIED ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF OXFORD.

WHEREAS, Article XVIII, Section 3, of the Constitution of the State of Ohio, grants municipalities the authority to exercise all powers of local self-government and to enact and enforce local police, sanitary, and other regulations that are not in conflict with the general laws; and

WHEREAS, City Council has determined that the current Section 541.08 ("Ethnic Intimidation") of Part Five ("General Offenses"), Chapter 541 ("Property Offenses") requires revision to better address the regulations regarding ethnic intimidation within the City of Oxford; and

WHEREAS, City Council has determined that the current Section 541.08 "Ethnic Intimidation" of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Oxford should be repealed in its entirety and replaced with a new Section 541.08 ("Ethnic Intimidation").

THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF OXFORD, OHIO, HEREBY ORDAINS THAT:

SECTION I: The current Section 541.08 ("Ethnic Intimidation") of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Oxford be and hereby is repealed in its entirety.

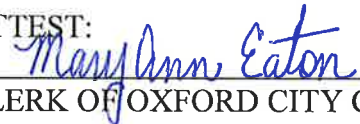
SECTION II: A new Section 541.08 ("Ethnic Intimidation") of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Oxford be and hereby is adopted to read as set forth in Exhibit A, which is attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference.

SECTION III: It is hereby found and determined that all formal actions of this Council concerning and relating to the adoption of this Ordinance were adopted in an open meeting of this Council, and that any and all deliberations of this Council that resulted in such formal action were in meetings open to the public, in compliance with all legal requirements including, but not limited to, Section 121.22 of the Ohio Revised Code.

SECTION IV: This Ordinance shall take effect at the earliest time permitted by law.


MAYOR

ADOPTED: September 7, 2021

ATTEST:

CLERK OF OXFORD CITY COUNCIL

INTRODUCED BY: MICHAEL SMITH

PREPARED BY: LAW (STAFF)

541.08 ETHNIC INTIMIDATION.

- (a) No person shall violate Ohio R.C. 2903.13, 2903.14, 2903.21, 2903.22, 2907.06, 2909.06, 2909.07, 2911.21, 2913.02, 2913.04, 2917.21(A)(3) to (5), 2923.12 or Sections 509.03, 509.04, 521.08, 533.04, 537.03, 537.04, 537.05, 537.06, 537.10(a)(3) to (5), 541.03, 541.04, 541.05, 541.051, 545.05, 545.06, 545.08, 549.02, 549.08, or 549.09 of the General Offenses Code by reason of or where one of the motives, reasons or purposes for the commission of the offense is the victim's race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, color, religion, or national origin, ancestry, age, disability, familial status or military status of another person or group of persons.
- (b) Whoever violates this section is guilty of ethnic intimidation, a misdemeanor of the first degree. If the underlying offense which is a necessary element of ethnic intimidation is itself a misdemeanor of the first degree, then upon conviction under this section, the court shall impose a mandatory minimum sentence of at least ten (10) days imprisonment. If the offender has previously been convicted under either this section or Section 2927.12, of the Ohio Revised Code, and the underlying offense is a first degree misdemeanor or the offense resulted in physical harm to any person, then upon conviction under this section the court shall impose a mandatory minimum sentence of at least ninety (90) days imprisonment.
- (c) This section does not apply if the facts alleged in the complaint would constitute a felony under Section 2927.12, Ohio Revised Code.

If you want peace, work for justice.

Pope Paul VI

HOUSING COSTS

Oxford lacks affordable housing, that is lower than \$250,000, as per the Comprehensive Plan currently being underwritten by the City of Oxford. And the continuum of housing for all income levels did not include those who are unhoused. *Is this fair or just?*

There are approximately 4000 landlords in Oxford, many of them absentee, whose rental fees are supported by parents of MU students typically at \$1000/per student/month. Many prefer to leave unrented units vacant instead of lowering rents to be affordable for people who work and want to live in Oxford. *Is this fair or just?*

Section 8 housing and subsidized housing are severely limited. *Is this fair or just?*

The Miami Mobile Home Park has been sold to equity investors who will “clean it up” and raise rents so investors will benefit. (This is a national issue.) Some of these folks may soon face the trauma of homelessness. *Is this fair or just?*

54% of renter households are “housing burdened, that is their housing costs exceed 30% of income. Recent evictions due to failure to pay are a result of this unjust burden.

FACTS ON THE GROUND

- TOPSS: 9% of the 422 **families** served in 2021 were homeless.
- FRC: provided wrap-around services to **79 unhoused individuals** and referred another 22 unhoused individuals who did not qualify for FRC services to other agencies (3/1/2021-2/28/2022)
- Cold shelter operated at 106% capacity, 11/2021 through 3/2022
- On average 10 Talawanda students / year are homeless. A few are “emancipated” minors. Others are members of families who have lost their housing due to a variety of circumstances. Affordable housing may be in Middletown or Hamilton placing undue and unjust stress on children and teens just as transferring to a new school and making new friends and other adjustments would.
- McCullough-Hyde discharge nurses have nowhere to send homeless patients

MISCONCEPTIONS AND MYTHS ABOUT HOMELESSNESS IN OXFORD-TALAWANDA

Some community members do not believe that there are homeless people in Oxford—they don't observe street people panhandling. But the Oxford Police Department knows better—they routinely ask people who are encamped on private property to move or arrest individuals who are trespassing on private property in hopes of finding a warm place to sleep. A fully housed Oxford is a myth.

The unhoused in Oxford face a dilemma: Leave Oxford or be forced to rely on friends and/or kinship systems for shelter. Many people who work in Oxford, including service workers at Miami University, do not earn enough to live here.

Another common misconception is that some people are living "rough" rather than going to shelters in other cities because they *choose* to do so—that is their freedom of choice. But when faced with a difficult decision: remain close to family and a job in Oxford able only to afford camping out in a tent *or* have access to a warm shelter with a shower and meals in a Hamilton shelter, unable to be close to family who live 20 minutes away in Oxford. Unhoused individuals struggle to choose the better of these two options. Lack of public transportation between Hamilton and Middletown and Oxford is yet another missing piece of the affordable housing puzzle, that adds to the difficulty of their choices.

REALITY CHECK

Losing safe, secure, stable home causes trauma, requires assistance from trained volunteers and skilled professionals who are trauma-sensitive and knowledgeable about available support services. Unhoused people are frequently confused and seem unable to figure out what to do. They are angry. They are grieving. They lack the financial and emotional resources to manage their situation. At stake is not only their home but their dignity—and their hope.

OHN believes it is a community's moral obligation to:

- to support the well-being of all its citizens
- provide safe, transitional housing
- budget resources that assist the unhoused in recovering their dignity and safety
- assist in job creation through economic development
- provide transitional housing options

A variety of **complex factors** result in an individual or family losing their home:

Lack of affordable housing	Job loss
Eviction	Housing burden
Mental Health challenges	Addiction
Poor Health / disability	Natural disasters
Economic inequality	Lack of a living wage
Generational poverty	

Local situations require local solutions. OHN is committed to supporting the good work that is being done by local social service agencies and City initiatives, while also recognizing the dangers faced by a small but significant number of our neighbors who have no good choices that will lead to the stability and dignity that housing in a familiar community, close to job and family, offers.

Homelessness and the dangers of living on the streets are problems everywhere and have only been exacerbated by the pandemic. In addition, homeless camps disturb neighborhoods and raise fear among residents. Eradicating systemic poverty goes a long way to solving both issues.

Cities of all sizes are creating solutions in ways unique to their locale. Successful cities address the situations of the most vulnerable members of their communities—and work to bring about systemic change. They

- have clear goals and are not ambivalent in their perspective
- recognize the existence and illegitimacy of homelessness
- acknowledge community accountability for all, especially those who are vulnerable due to systems that perpetuate poverty and inequality
- devote financial and human resources to providing wrap-around services and housing options
- compensate the agencies involved with direct and indirect service that connect with and support individuals in need
- acknowledge the challenges faced by those born into life in poverty.

The voiceless and unseen are our neighbors here in Oxford, working among us in the service industries, that do not pay a living wage. It is a common complaint that the high valuations in Oxford's housing market, both resident-owned and rental, are significantly influenced by Miami University. About 4000 landlords benefit by maximizing profits and some make a decision to let their stock remain vacant if not rented to affluent students, instead of making apartments and houses available to the unhoused. **Justice is not being served by these decisions.**

OHN supports ways of redistributing resources to meet the unmet needs of ALL of our neighbors. Join us in our development of a homelessness network, to work in solidarity with those who don't *choose* the honeysuckle thicket but see no other option and support those who are already doing the good work of justice, of providing housing for ALL.

OHN's ACTIONS GOING FORWARD

- Focus on collecting stories of people who have lost their homes and are transient
- Inform the public of the "facts" on the ground through use of media and special presentations
- Continue working with and building community connections
- Support an annual cold shelter
- Lobby for the expansion of affordable housing and rental stock

Please Become Part of the Solution

For more information, contact: Karen Francis at 937.776.1649 or innerwork43@gmail.com (Please put OHN in the subject line.)

Vision

Homelessness is eradicated by making safe, secure, clean housing available to those who need it with a wide range of affordable housing and rental equity for non-student residents who want to live and work in Talawanda School District and Oxford area.

Mission

- Raise public awareness of homelessness in our area.
- Support the good work been done by local agencies to provide solutions for those individuals and families in need.
- Eliminate housing insecurity by collaborating with an existing network of agencies, local governments and religious communities to enable long-term affordable, stable housing.

Founding Beliefs

- Safe, secure housing is a human right.
- Stable housing is the foundation of human dignity.
- Communities are accountable for the well-being of all their residents.
- Our community has a moral responsibility to meet the basic subsistence needs of the members of the Talawanda School District -Oxford area.
- National social trends and issues manifest in local communities.
- Local problems require local solutions.

OHN arises from a sense of collective, communal obligation and accountability to provide for the basic needs of our most vulnerable members so they can build lives that are stable and secure.

Founding Members

Ann Fuehrer

Karen Francis

Linda Simmons

All are Board members of Oxford Citizens for Peace and Justice and have in common a history of justice engagement in a variety of settings. The women share a deep-rooted desire to address the needs of those who live voiceless and unseen among us. OHN is an initiative of OCPJ, and we accept their support and encouragement with gratitude.

OCPJ itself has a history of supporting efforts on behalf of the unhoused. In February of 2021, friends and members of OCPJ donated \$14,000 to the Family Resource Center so that their cold shelter could remain open an extra month. Funds also enabled FRC to provide additional funds for housing aid to clients during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

OHN's Community Connections include:

- Oxford Police Department
- Family Resource Center
- TOPSS
- Tri-Health Director of Nursing
- Eradicating Systemic Poverty (ESP) Committee, Oxford Presbyterian Church

- Butler County Homelessness and Housing Coalition
- Family Promise
- Oxford Free Clinic
- Talawanda School District
- City of Oxford Housing Advisory Commission
- Miami University School of Business
- Miami University Department of Social Work
- Oxford Tomorrow

OHN debuted officially on May 1, 2022, as presenters at “Housing on the Continuum: Homelessness, transitional housing, and affordable housing in the Oxford community,” hosted by the ESP Committee of Oxford Presbyterian Church.

For more information, contact Karen Francis, 937.776.1649

innerwork43@ gmail.com

(Please put OHN in the subject line.)