

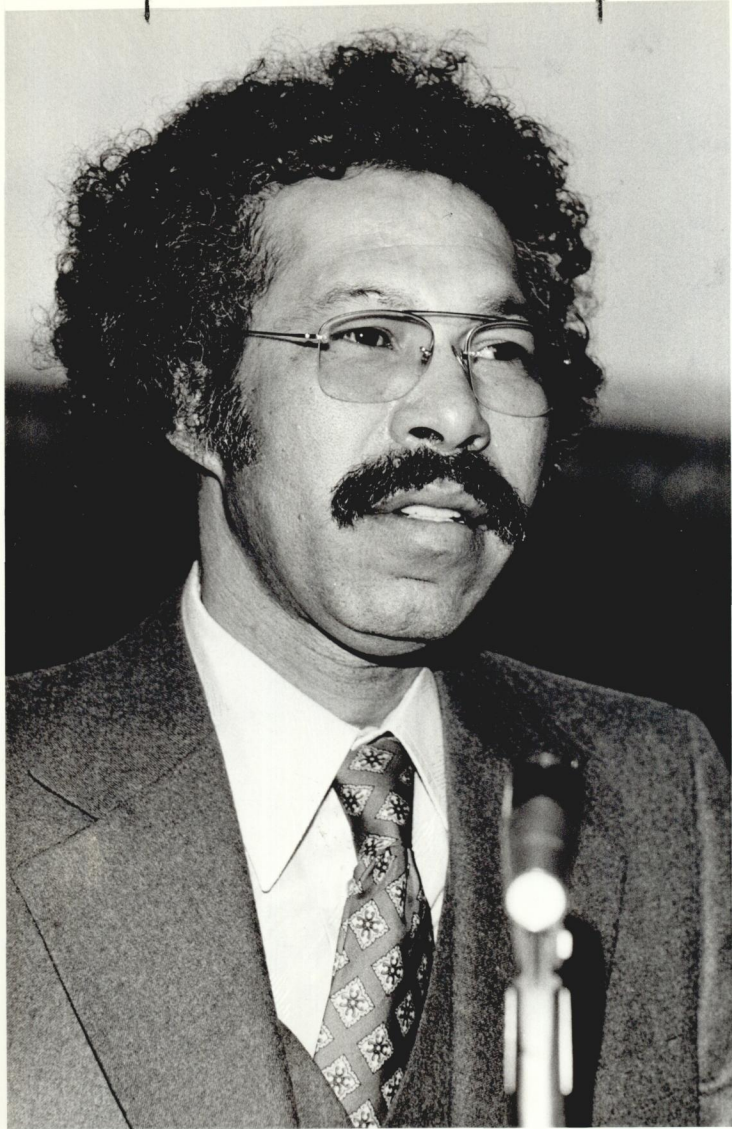


human  
New Human RIGHTS commission TAKES OATH 66-11-60



William Rogers - Commissioner





321/2

10-180



## GAYLYN NEWS BRIEFS

## OKLAHOMA CITY DIFFA CHAPTER FORMED

The formation of the Oklahoma City chapter of the Design Industries Foundation for AIDS (DIFFA) was announced during the fourth annual Valley City Pride Parade in New York. DIFFA is an AIDS benefit at the Will Rogers Theater last month. DIFFA/Oklahoma City is the sixteenth chapter of the New York-based foundation that raises and grants funds to community-based AIDS service organizations which provide direct care services, preventive education, public advocacy and clinical trials.

In making the announcement, Brad Simons, the new chairman of DIFFA/Oklahoma City, said, "Since DIFFA's start in 1984, it has granted more than \$18 million to more than 800 programs around the country."

DIFFA, one of the nation's largest AIDS fund-raising foundations, was started by a group of interior designers in New York City. Nine years later, DIFFA includes individuals in every aspect of design, from interior and floral to architecture and landscape, and now includes individuals like Chairman of Douglas Furniture Michael Sorrentino, Donna Karan, Bob Mackie, Playtex Enterprises Vice President Michael Perlin, ABC's Easy Morning and Late Night Programming President Phil Beuth, Council of Fashion Designers of America Executive Director Fern Mallis, and other dedicated individuals from around the country.

In forming DIFFA/Oklahoma City, a local AIDS fund-raising organization, VOGM Inc., will be the basis for the new group, which also contains several local individuals, who, for the past nine months, have been investigating the possibility of beginning the local DIFFA chapter. Raising funds for local AIDS organizations, VOGM Inc. has been in existence for more than four years and has raised more than \$40,000 with its annual Halloween benefit and other similar events during the year.

The recent Halloween benefit was the first official event of DIFFA/Oklahoma City, during which \$20,000 was raised for local AIDS service organizations. Other events are already being planned, one for February and the other for later in the spring. Simons said, "DIFFA's events around the country have been extremely successful and we will have the benefit of their expertise in fund-raising as we move forward. This will be a major benefit for the Oklahoma City chapter and, therefore, a benefit for the people affected by HIV and AIDS in the Oklahoma City area."

The DIFFA foundation produced a very successful musical tour of "Heart Strings," which traveled to more than 33 cities from 1989-1992, raising funds and awareness. The foundation also markets the jeweled red ribbon pins seen on celebrities such as La Taylor, Neil Carter, Mary Pipher and others. DIFFA's most recent event at the Lincoln Center in New York on October 18 raised more than \$1.5 million in one night dance gala that featured the design and dance world together. In that event, called "A Demand Performance," nineteen of the top fashion designers created new outfits for nineteen of the top dance companies in New York who danced to premiere pieces from nineteen of the top choreographers.

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## NAMES QUILT TO BE SHOWN IN TULSA

On Friday, December 3, the NAMES Project Memorial Quilt will be presented at the Tulsa City Center.

During the past 24 months, the members of the Tulsa chapter of the NAMES Project Quilt have worked thousands of hours in preparation for the display.

The steering committee has raised over \$7,500 through donations and various fund-raising efforts, although the budgeted expenses on the display will exceed \$12,000.

Future fund-raising events have been planned by the committee to offset the deficit, and private financial contributions are welcomed. The Tulsa Area Chapter of the NAMES Project will return to the community any funds received over the amount needed for the display, donating any proceeds to local 501(c)(3) organizations.

Those planning to bring a new panel for the Quilt should call (801) 748-3111 as soon as possible so that space can be made available.

Along with the Quilt display, Tulsa will observe World AIDS Day, marked by a candle-light walk, beginning at 6:30 p.m. on December 4. The walk will begin at the Quilt display and end at one of the downtown churches.

## HODGES RECALL EFFORT

Following two phone calls with Oklahoma City Councilmember Beverly Hodges, Mark Houston, Ward Six resident and organizer of the effort to recall Hodges, talked about his dissatisfaction with her performance. He helped elect to public office and about the recall effort.

"She keeps seeing herself as our friend, and this is one of these things I worry about: these white, liberal friends who have nothing to lose and won't speak up, but they all want to tell you how great you are. We don't have any delusions about getting the necessary 15,000 signatures we need to have her recalled, but we will consider gathering 1,700 signatures a victory. That is one more than she got when she was elected."

"During our phone conversations, her arguments were that everything needs to be about education. That we can't go into our schools, our teachers can't speak out about being gay. We are unprotected. When I said, 'Beverly, you understand what this is all about, will you speak out?' she said no. 'She talked about not wanting to be identified with the Bible 'thumbs,' she talked about what a good community we are, but she also talked about our lack of support. She admitted that she got great help from the gay and lesbian community during her election campaign, but that support will not be there again."

Residents of Ward Six, the Oklahoma City Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus and Sigma Xi Equal will have tables set up in the clubs in Oklahoma City where supporters of the Human Rights Ordinance and the local Beverly Hodges effort can sign petitions. Houston explained that boundaries of Ward Six extend south of 23rd, between Portland and Santa Fe, past Reno going south. Those wishing to know in which ward they live should call the County Election Board, said Houston.

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## URBAN LEAGUE, NAACP AND CAPITOL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BACK CITY EQUAL RIGHTS ORDINANCE

When the Oklahoma City Council in October rejected a revised version of the existing Human Rights Ordinance that also included protection for lesbian and gay men, it effectively ended protection for all Oklahoma City residents. Response from the community to the Council's decision has been unprecedented.

Standing behind the gay and lesbian community are the big guns of the Oklahoma City Urban League, the Capitol Chamber of Commerce and the Oklahoma City chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

Representatives of these high-powered minority organizations have pledged their support to the gay community in return for the city's community's support in defeating the City's proposed MAPS project unless certain conditions are met. The Urban League and the NAACP recently established a four-point program outlining their criteria, which includes mandating a percentage of the contracting opportunities be awarded to minority businesses in the reconstruction/renovation project which the City proposes for the downtown area and the passage of a human rights ordinance with the inclusion of sexual orientation as a protected class. If the City decides not to accept the four-point proposal, these organizations will move ahead with their plan to defeat the one-cent sales tax proposed to finance the city MAPS project. The sales tax vote is in December.

The special meeting of the Human Rights Commission was called so that commission members could discuss and adopt the revised ordinance before presenting it to the City Council, whose next meeting will be held on November 22. The eight commissioners present came to longbeers over the sub-poison issue, which would have given the

commission the ability to obtain documents on any discrimination case they were hearing. While four of the commissioners felt sub-poison power was crucial to their ability to perform their function in mediating discrimination claims, Cu D. Nguyen, member at large, held firm in his resolve that the sub-poison power was unnecessary and could lead to rejection of the ordinance by the City Council. Following discussion, sub-poison power was removed from the proposed ordinance, and it was accepted by the commission.

Expressing their opinion that the proposed ordinance needed "more work," Commissioners Waddell, Rasmussen, and Long voted against its acceptance.

Prior to the second vote, Commission Chair Bill Rogers gave an impassioned speech, reminding the other commissioners that no City Council member — except for Mayor Ron Norick — would be up for re-election in 1994, leaving the council unchanged from the one in October. The time to prevent and pass this human rights ordinance was now, he said, while it has the endorsement and full support of the Urban League, the NAACP, and the Capitol Chamber of Commerce.

Accepted by the Human Rights Commission, the ordinance will now be brought before the City Council. When it will be placed on the Council's agenda, however, is up in the air. That decision is made by the City Manager, who prepares the Council's meeting agenda. With the City MAPS project at stake, odds are that the ordinance will be presented on November 22.

Community members and representatives are strongly urged to attend the City Council meeting on November 22 at 8:30 a.m., 200 N. Walker, Third Floor, City Council Chambers.

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The TOHR Gay Information Line is here for you.  
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TOHR and bar information.  
The helpline is staffed 7 days a week, 8:00 PM to 10:00 PM.

743-GAYS



## THE READERS' FORUM



### Letters to the Editors

Dear Friends —

Your publication is appreciated at the Homosexual Information Center (HIC). And I know I find it hard to understand why sometimes an issue of a publication "seems" to have so much material you find interesting when that same issue may not seem much interesting to the editors or other readers. But I found your October 19th issue so full of interesting material that I took a long time reading it, and wanted to let you know that I think it is both interesting and very important to your readers. I could almost list the whole contents as equally important — is that good grammar? But I did wonder why I have not seen or heard any other place about the information on teenagers being "slipped" from California to Utah for "curing." I mean the article "The Kindness of Strangers," a lesbian and gay youth detention in Utah by Amelia Craig. It is important for homosexuals to know that some "professionals" are charlatans and exploit us as much as the religious right nuts. I have not seen Lambda Defense material on this yet, but wonder if the professional groups for homosexuals in the psychiatric community have been involved in checking on this. And across the page there was an equally good article by Kathy Dettich on visiting the religious people at Focus on the Family in Colorado. We need to know our enemies. But a balance was had with the good interview with Kelly Kirby. And I like thoughtful opinions such as the issue of radical activism in the community that concerns Martin Lethman. And the usual coverage you give your readers is good. I often am able to tell someone to check with you and groups in Oklahoma can be up-to-date thanks to having your publication. It is hoped that someday the dozen or so libraries/archives will get material from all movement newspapers and publishers and that everyone will send you and us clippings dealing with homosexuality so that we can have them to refer people to, such as college students who contact us for leads for their papers, research, etc.

Keep up the good work, and thanks.

Stoney,  
William "Bill" Edward Glover  
Bossier City, LA

An Open Letter to Beverly Hodges —

After your recent appearance on OKTA and your recent Oklahoma interview I find myself even more confused and dismayed by your position than ever before.

You continue to assert that human rights is not an issue that concerns citizens of Ward 6. We filed over 200 names of Ward 6 residents on your recall affidavit. Beverly, just how many votes does it take before you consider it an issue in our Ward?

I suspect that you are right in your assessment that we will not be able to gather the 12 or 13 thousand signatures necessary to effect your actual recall. The task is

daunting and we are not politically naive. However, it might be prudent for you to consider that in 1987 you won your council seat, on a recount, with a whopping margin of 12 votes. Two hundred may later become a very significant number.

The city code would require us to gather more than 13,000 signatures to recall you now. You and I both know that is almost four times the total votes cast in your last contested election. Nevertheless, we will pursue the course, and each signature we gather will be another citizen urging you to listen and lead. If we get 500 will that be enough? 1,000? 2,000? Where is the magic number, Beverly? Not the one in the city code but the one inside your own conscience and intellect?

You talk of violence in the Ward, but seem somehow to separate that from the violence lesbians and gay men face in their everyday lives. Actual physical violence and also the subtle and quiet emotional violence of discrimination. And even the blatant and hate-filled rhetoric of people like Mr. Graves. You heard him speak to the Council. Can it be that his voice carries more weight than our 200? 500? 1,000?

You talk of the "serious penalties" that might be imposed on businesses who openly discriminate against people of different sexual orientation. \$500 is a "serious" penalty? What about the penalty being levied against the person who loses their job? What about the cost to someone who is denied housing? What about the value of the life of a confused teenager who is harassed in school and who hears no voice in the larger community except that of Mr. Graves and his kind? In my own opinion, \$500 does not weigh very heavily against the alternatives.

You speak of your friends in the lesbian and gay community. Name one who will support the stand you are taking. You, yourself, appointed Sister Pat Keefe to the Human Rights Commission. Now you have ignored her support for the ordinance and she has resigned in conscience. You have deprived all of us in Ward 6 of her compassionate moral voice and leadership. What in the world can you be thinking?

You have recently characterized those of us who support human rights for all people as a "militant minority." You haven't even met us — have refused to meet with us. Does it not seem arrogant in the extreme to you, an elected official, to dismiss legitimate dissent in her constituents with glib name-calling? By the way, most of the names on your petition are "straight people" who were less than amused to see themselves so flippantly categorized. You are mistaken in your judgment of our character. Your counselors are not serving you well.

In spite of your recent statements, I cannot bring myself to believe that your mind is completely closed on this issue. I would like to invite you to be my guest at an open meeting with people from the gay and lesbian community, so that you can hear our stories and concerns. I will personally guarantee your courteous treatment. Surely there is some way for us to understand each other.

Sincerely,  
Mark Houston,  
Ward Six Friends of Human Rights

## PROCEEDS TO BENEFIT HERLAND LEGAL DEFENSE FUND

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THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 18

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SPONSOR: \$25<sup>00</sup> Donation, \$25<sup>00</sup> Preferred Seating

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Over the last two decades, Cris Williamson has become a household word in the world of women's music. She has performed around the globe, including a concert at Carnegie Hall, and she has sold nearly one million albums and CDs. A gifted singer-songwriter, Cris has been called a folk hero by some, a teacher and spirit healer by others. She possesses a voice that critic Ben Fong-Torres called "a full-bodied, high-sounding thing of beauty."

"Williamson is a fine pianist and guitarist, a brilliant composer and lyricist... she caps all the talent off with deeply felt spirituality and compassion for and humor about the human condition."  
— Boston Globe

Tret Fure began writing music at the age of 19 while a student at UC Berkeley. She cut her first solo album, TRET FURE in 1973 with MCA Records. She has since recorded three solo albums and worked in collaboration with Cris on several other albums.

A charismatic performer, Fure had the audience in her lap. — Daily Californian

# City Human Rights Commission Resolves First Case

By Carla Hinton  
Staff Writer

The Oklahoma City Human Rights Commission has resolved its first complaint — the case of a woman

who alleged she was the victim of discrimination by her westside employer.

Most of the racial discrimination, intimidation or harassment

complaints that have been sent to the commission have not been under its jurisdiction to handle, but under that of Oklahoma City police, said assistant city attorney Rita Tal-

ley. The nine-member commission was formed in 1988.

At a recent meeting, chairman Tulio Ramirez said the commission has been eager to show it can serve as

an effective means of resolving conflicts as a type of mediation board.

Ramirez said the case involved a Hispanic woman who alleged that Southern Food Service, 10321 W Reno, discriminated against her by hiring white employees at a higher salary and by neglecting to give her a raise.

The woman told the commission that white employees were paid hourly wages 50 cents or more higher than she, Ramirez said.

Human rights coordinator Joyce Plunkett said the commissioners preferred not to announce the complainant's name in their first resolved case. They believe other citizens might be discouraged from coming to the commission for help if they knew their names might be made public, she said.

In her complaint filed with the commission, the woman alleged she was doing the work of two people at a work station that normally required two employees, while the

company had three workers at other, similar work stations.

Ramirez said the woman quit her job during the commission's investigation, but she still wanted them to continue.

When company officials were first contacted, they said the woman's complaint had no merit, Ramirez said.

Later, the company agreed to give the woman the difference between her salary and the other employees' in back pay, which amounted to almost \$500, he said.

But the company specified they were not admitting any wrongdoing in the case, Ramirez said.

Contacted at home, the woman and her husband said they were very satisfied with the way their complaint was handled.

"I think they really did a good job and helped me a lot," the woman said.

Ramirez said the commission hopes other people will feel free to turn to the commission for help in similar situations.

"A lot of people don't know where to go when this type of thing happens. They either suppress it, react violently or they go through the extra expense of taking the matter to court," Ramirez said.

# Relations Workshop Scheduled

The Oklahoma City Human Rights Commission, along with Langston University, will present a workshop titled "Human Relations: Diversity in the 1990s" from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. July 19 at Metro Tech Business Conference Center.

Workshop topics will include multicultural education, the Civil Rights Act of 1990, human relations in the workplace, and drugs in the work environment.

Scheduled speakers include attorney Rita Douglas Talley and Drs. Darnell Williams, C.D. Jones, Joseph Westerheide and Worth Hadley.

Keynote speaker for a luncheon will be attorney Melvin Hall.

Payment of a \$20 pre-registration fee by July 16 is encouraged to ensure guaranteed seating.

Registration information can be obtained by contacting the Langston University Urban Center at 424-4020 or the Human Rights Commission at 297-2988.

College credit will be offered for \$43.50.



# Commission Questions Policies of Leadership Oklahoma City

By Carla Hinton  
Staff Writer

The Oklahoma City Human Rights Commission is questioning certain policies followed by a local civics training program, a city official said this week.

The commission has sent a letter to Leadership Oklahoma City inquiring about policies the organization might have regarding age and other selection factors, said Rita Talley, an Oklahoma City assistant attorney who advises the commission.

J. Ed Barth, Leadership Oklahoma City president, said the organization's policies, including one regarding the desired age of participants, are patterned after leadership programs across the country.

"As far as I know, we have not discriminated against anyone," Barth said.

"The most important point is that Leadership Oklahoma City and the human rights commission share very much the same interests."

Leadership Oklahoma City is a civics training program in which participants attend monthly sessions designed to de-

velop leadership for community service through discussion of issues such as health care, education, government, economic development, justice, public safety and the arts.

Assistant city attorney Talley said no formal

complaint has been filed with the commission, but rather concerns were voiced by several commissioners.

"It has just come to the attention of one or more commissioners that they may or may not have a policy on

age," Talley said.

Talley would not comment on Leadership Oklahoma City's response to the commission's letter of inquiry because the commission had not had time to meet and address the response.

Karen Luke, Leadership Oklahoma City executive director, said candidates for the program must live or work in Oklahoma City, have demonstrated a commitment to the community through work and volunteer service, and be

between the ages of 30 and 45.

Through the selection process, officials try to choose a training class that is diverse regarding career, geographical and ethnic backgrounds, Luke said.

She said participants

selected for other leadership programs across the country are generally in the 30- to 45-year-old range, much like Leadership Oklahoma City.

"Leadership Oklahoma City's goal is to encourage new and emerg-

ing young leaders. Its purpose is in giving training to people who would then have years and years to give back to the community," she said.

"We really share the goals of the human rights commission,

which is diversity and fairness."

Leadership Oklahoma officials said Tuesday that the statewide organization, which is similar to Leadership Oklahoma City, does not have an age policy.



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# Program's Policies Questioned

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# City to Host New Citizens

By Carla Hinton  
Staff Writer

Fifty people from countries around the world will leave the Oklahoma City Council chambers Monday with mending Uncle Sam might say is one of the most important valuables in the world — U.S. citizenship.

The Oklahoma City Human Rights Commission's 10 a.m. meeting will be the backdrop for a naturalization ceremony conducted by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service's

Fifty citizenship candidates from countries such as Bangladesh, China, Thailand, Mexico and the Philippines will take the citizenship oath, said

Joyce Plunkett, human rights commission coordinator.

Commission vice chairman Patricia Keefe said it is appropriate that such a ceremony be held in conjunction with the local human rights group's meeting.

"It's important to remind the public that our diverse society is a gift to us, not a burden," Keefe said.

"The Oklahoma City Human Rights Commission believes in doing everything we can to educate the public about minorities. Certainly a naturalization ceremony reminds us that our country is one that welcomes immigrants and others who move away from their native land," she said.

The ceremony will be the first administrative naturalization hearing to be conducted by the Immigration and Naturalization Service's state office, said Grace Sena, director of its Oklahoma City office.

Sena said such ceremonies were previously conducted in federal court by a judge, but provisions of the Immigration Act of 1990 authorized immigration and naturalization service district directors to confer citizenship.

She said citizenship candidates now have a choice of the courtroom ceremony or one sponsored by the immi-

Focus Views

See CITIZENS, Page 2

# Citizens

From Page 1

gration service at another location.

Participating in the ceremony will be Mayor Ron Norick; immigration service Dallas district director Ronald C. Chandler; deputy district director Jorge Eisermann Jr.; Nancy Hand, naturalization director for the immigration service; and Oklahoma City Human Rights Commission chairman Earnest

Long.

Commission coordinator Plunkett said one of the citizenship candidates will make a brief speech.

Other participating organizations include the Daughters of the American Revolution's Oklahoma City chapter, the National Society of Colonial Dames, Daughters of the American Colonists' Isabel Hastings Dial chapter and the League of Women Voters.

# Citizenship Oath Today

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# Human Rights Observed

Oklahoma City Mayor Ron Norick has proclaimed this week Human Rights Week.

Norick said he is calling upon all citizens to continue to strive to eliminate prejudice, intolerance, bigotry and discrimination.

The Oklahoma City Council has adopted the view that there is no greater danger to the health, morals, safety and welfare of the city and its residents than the existence of groups prejudiced against others because of their diversity, Norick said.

The city also embraces the doctrine that all people, regardless of race, color, gender, sexual orientation, re-

ligion, national origin, age or disability, are entitled to all the enjoyments that citizenship guarantees.





# Human Rights Ordinance Due Study

By Jack Money  
Staff Writer

The heated issue of human rights for homosexuals may be behind political maneuvers surrounding the March elections for four Oklahoma City Council wards.

The curtain will open on the races this month — a month before the filing period even begins — when the council takes up discussion of a human rights ordinance.

The council is taking up the issue at the request of the Oklahoma City Human Rights Commission.

Commission members say they have been operating without an ordinance for more than a year while a draft proposal has been in council committee awaiting revision.

What makes the issue political is that the commission wants provisions in the ordinance that would protect homosexuals from discrimination.

Councilman Jack Cornett asked for the ordinance to come to a council vote before the end of this month.

His action strikes Councilman Mark Schwartz as being politically motivated, although Cornett denies it.

"I think that it is really unfortunate that there are some people who wish to use a segment of our society solely for political purposes, without caring about anybody's feelings," said Schwartz, who is expected to run in March for re-election to his Ward 2 post.

"Everyone already knows the position of each city council member on the original proposal," he said, referring to the council's 6-3 vote in October 1993 not to consider the measure.

Cornett agreed with Schwartz's assessment that the council's support for such an ordinance probably hasn't changed.

But Cornett also said he believes the measure has been languishing in the Council Judiciary Committee, led by Schwartz, for too long.

"It has no political motivations; I am not running.

"I felt like it needs to be brought forward," said Cornett, "not tabled in committee. It is wrong to play games with the Human Rights Commission and not honor their request to put it before the council.

"I feel very strongly that to keep this in the committee for more than a year is wrong when we have a commission created to bring things to the council they are concerned about."

Besides Cornett, Ward 5 Councilman Jerry Foshee, Ward 1 Councilman Frosty Peak, Ward 4 Councilwoman Frances Lowrey, Ward 6 Councilwoman Beverly Hodges and Mayor Ron Norick supported not considering the ordinance in 1993.

Schwartz said it is because of their solid positions that the measure has stayed in committee.

"I have been trying to find some alternatives that would be accepted by a majority of the city council and by a majority of the community," he said, adding that Ward 8 Councilwoman Jackie Carey has been working on the proposed ordinance diligently as well.

"It was not a political issue in terms of my re-election until last Wednesday, when some of my colleagues raised it," Schwartz said, "although it likely would have become an issue at some point of time in this election process."

A current law Oklahoma City has protects homosexuals from hate crimes, although a law like it elsewhere has been declared unconstitutional.

The original proposed ordinance, on the other hand, would have made homosexuals a protected class from any type of discrimination. The proposed ordinance prompted threats, hate mail and a flood of people to City Hall to speak about its graces or evils.

Both supporters and opponents figure the proposed ordinance will become an issue in the upcoming election.

It was hot in 1993 — so hot, in fact, that the council had been content to let the proposed

ordinance wait.

Coincidentally, support for bringing the ordinance to a vote now comes from a surprising person: Councilwoman Hodges, who also is running for re-election in March.

Hodges was criticized by some of her constituents for voting not to consider the initial proposal.

A group organized after that vote called Citizens of Ward Six tried but failed to force her into a recall election over the issue.

To have it returned now could fan the fires of her opposition yet again, although she appeared unconcerned last week when council members were discussing whether to bring the proposed ordinance back for a vote.

Hodges could not be reached.

Filing for the council Wards 2, 5, 6 and 8 is Feb. 21-24. The primary election is scheduled for March 21, and a general election, if needed, will be April 4, city officials have said.

# Human Rights Proposal Back in Time for Election

By Jack Money  
Staff Writer

The heated issue of human rights for homosexuals may be behind political maneuvers surrounding the March elections for four Oklahoma City Council wards.

The curtain will open on the races this month — a month before the filing period even begins — when the council takes up discussion of a human rights ordinance.

The council is taking up the issue at the request of the Oklahoma City Human Rights Commission.

Commission members say they have been operating without an ordinance for more than a year while a draft proposal has been in council committee awaiting revision.

What makes the issue political is that the commission wants provisions in the ordinance that would protect homosexuals from discrimination.

Councilman Jack Cornett asked for the ordinance to come to a council vote before the end of this month.

His action strikes Councilman Mark Schwartz as being politically motivated, although Cornett denies it.

"I think that it is really unfortunate that there are some people who wish to use a segment of our society solely for political purposes, without caring about anybody's feelings," said Schwartz, who is expected to run in March for re-election to his Ward 2 post.

"Everyone already knows the position of each city council member on the original proposal," he said, referring to the council's 6-3 vote in October 1993 not to consider the measure.

Cornett agreed with Schwartz's assessment that the council's support for such an ordinance probably hasn't changed.

But Cornett also said he believes the measure has been languishing in the Council Judiciary Committee, led by Schwartz, for too long.

"It has no political motivations; I am not running.

"I felt like it needs to be brought forward," said Cornett, "not tabled in committee. It is wrong to play games with the Human Rights Commission and not honor their request to put it before the council.

"I feel very strongly that to keep this in the committee for more than a year is wrong when

we have a commission created to bring things to the council they are concerned about."

Besides Cornett, Ward 5 Councilman Jerry Foshee, Ward 1 Councilman Frosty Peak, Ward 4 Councilwoman Frances Lowrey, Ward 6 Councilwoman Beverly Hodges and Mayor Ron Norick supported not considering the ordinance in 1993.

Schwartz said it is because of their solid positions that the measure has stayed in committee.

"I have been trying to find some alternatives that would be accepted by a majority of the city council and by a majority of the community," he said, adding that Ward 8 Councilwoman Jackie Carey has been working on the proposed ordinance diligently as well.

"It was not a political issue in terms of my re-election until last Wednesday, when some of my colleagues raised it," Schwartz said, "although it likely would have become an issue at some point of time in this election process."

A current law Oklahoma City has protects homosexuals from hate crimes, although a law like it elsewhere has been declared unconstitutional.

The original proposed ordinance, on the other hand, would have made homosexuals a protected class from any type of discrimination. The proposed ordinance prompted threats, hate mail and a flood of people to City Hall to speak about its graces or evils.

Both supporters and opponents figure the proposed ordinance will become an issue in the upcoming election.

It was hot in 1993 — so hot, in fact, that the council had been content to let the proposed ordinance wait.

Coincidentally, support for bringing the ordinance to a vote now comes from a surprising person: Councilwoman Hodges, who also is running for re-election in March.

Hodges was criticized by some of her constituents for voting not to consider the initial proposal.

A group organized after that vote called Citizens of Ward Six tried but failed to force her into a recall election over the issue.

Hodges could not be reached for further comment.

Filing for the council Wards 2, 5, 6 and 8 is Feb. 21-24. The primary election is scheduled for March 21, and a general election, if needed, will be April 4, city officials have said.

# Human Rights Law

## Due Council Vote

By Jack Money  
Staff Writer

Tuesday's Oklahoma City Council vote on a controversial proposed human rights ordinance that would protect homosexuals from discrimination in areas of employment and housing isn't likely to be approved.

A more interesting vote will be when the council also is asked to approve modifications to an existing hate crimes ordinance.

Officials aren't nearly as certain about whether there will be enough votes on the council to approve the changes to the hate crimes ordinance that already names homosexuals as a protected class.

The hate crimes ordinance the council will consider Tuesday is the same law the council approved 8-0 in 1988, with current council members Jackie Carey, Beverly Hodges and Mark Schwartz voting in its favor.

Mayor Ron Norick also voted for it, as did former council members Pete White, I.G. Purser, Jim Scott and Goree James.

The only councilman who failed to vote then was Jack Cornett, who apparently was not in the council chambers when the vote was taken.

Officials said modifications to the 1988 ordinance have been required because the U.S. Supreme Court has said certain provisions in another law like the one in Oklahoma City was unconstitutional.

Councilman Mark Schwartz, who heads the council's judiciary committee, said his group has been working on changes to the 1988 ordinance since September.

The group has been working on the changes as a compromise proposal because he and other committee members knew there was no chance to pass the 1993 proposal the commission wants.

Then, the council voted 6-3 to not

consider the proposal, and the vote tally likely has not changed, he said.

"When certain council members have said that nothing has been done on this subject, they are wrong," Schwartz said. "I just didn't share it with them, because we were still working on it."

The revised 1988 ordinance calls for mandatory minimum penalties to be leveled against a person if it is proved a certain type of crime is committed against someone and proved the crime is motivated by discrimination.

Crimes cited by the ordinance proposal are vandalism, assault, and assault and battery. Mandatory minimum punishments of fines and jail time are suggested for each.

Meanwhile, Schwartz also said Cu Nguyen, chairman of the Oklahoma City Human Rights Commission, has asked for the controversial 1993 proposal to be returned to his group.

That proposal has been on the docket of the judiciary committee for more than a year. It was sent to the committee after the council voted in October 1993 not to consider the new ordinance to replace the one passed in 1988.

Some council members have said bringing the human rights proposal back now is a political move on the part of some who would like to see certain candidates in the coming council race labeled as "pro-gay."

Council members who have asked for the proposal to be considered deny it.

Schwartz said the committee is sending forward another ordinance proposal Tuesday that would protect anyone from discrimination because of their background.

He said the ordinance does not name protected classes, adding "It covers everyone."

# 2 Human Rights Plans Die In City Council Voting

By Jack Money  
Staff Writer

Cu Nguyen, chairman of the Oklahoma City Human Rights Commission, said he knew what would happen when the Oklahoma City Council took up a controversial human rights ordinance that would extend protection to homosexuals.

Tuesday, his prediction came true as the council voted to reject two different proposals that would have brought a human rights ordinance back to Oklahoma City.

"We are basically back to square one," said Nguyen after the meeting.

One proposal would have given homosexuals and members of minorities city protection from discrimination in employment and housing and some crimes.

An accompanying proposal asked for passage of a modified version of an existing hate crimes law that once was used by the commission. It narrowly was defeated as well.

The human rights commission has been without a law to use since late 1993, when federal court decisions on similar hate crime laws indicated Oklahoma City's also could be unconstitutional.

The problem is Oklahoma City's law prohibits harassment and intimidation, actions that courts have ruled fall under the protection of free speech.

Both votes were observed by nearly 300 people, most of whom arrived at City Hall by buses early in the morning.

They packed the council chambers at 7:30 a.m., leaving standing room only and prompting the city's fire marshal to clear some of the crowd away from exit doors.

Some arrived carrying signs expressing their distaste for homosexuality.

One sign read "God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve."

The council voted 6-3 to reject the human rights ordinance that would have given protections against discrimination in housing and employment because of a person's race, color, religion, creed, ancestry, age, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, disability or family status.

Council members voting to reject the ordinance were Frosty Peak, Jack Cornett, Frances Lowrey, Jerry Foshee, Beverly Hodges and Mayor Ron Norick.

Voting to accept the ordinance were Mark Schwartz, Willa Johnson and Jackie Carney.

The vote rejecting the modified hate crimes law was 5-4. Only Norick changed his vote.

Norick said before that vote he supported the hate crimes ordinance when it was originally passed in 1988 and said the old law needed to be modified.

The mayor said he does not condone racial slurs regardless of how courts have ruled.

Giving examples of several such slurs and prefacing them with an apology, Norick said, "I don't use them in my personal life, and I doubt that most of you here today use those words."

Norick also said he supported having enhanced penalties for people who accompany their verbal actions with either assault or destruction of property of a person because of the person's background.

Norick said he does not condone homosexuality, and that those who know him should be aware of his commitment to Jesus Christ and his church.

But he added that does not give him or anyone else the right to go out and beat on someone because of their sexual orientation or because they are a minority.

"Most of us, deep in our hearts, will admit that, but most of us don't have the guts to sit here in a public meeting

and say so," Norick said.

"It is an issue of human decency."

Among the speakers opposing the proposed laws was state Rep. Bill Graves, R-Oklahoma City. He said the Legislature does not consider that people discriminated against because of their sexual orientation are a protected class.

He said existing law should protect everyone, a statement several council members said they agreed with.

"This is really part of an affirmative action program to protect homosexuals and give them special treatment — I don't think they need it," Graves said.

Pam Fleischaker, a member of the Oklahoma City Human Rights Commission, said the 1988 ordinance was an example of good government, while failure to pass a replacement law Tuesday represented the worst in government.

She said all minorities, not just homosexuals, would suffer without a law for the commission to use.

"I find it hard to believe that any member of this council would allow anyone in this city to be assaulted and battered because of their minority status," Fleischaker said.

"If we cannot protect people from assault and battery, what are we here for?"

Commission Chairman Nguyen seemed at a loss for an answer. But he said afterward he is not without hope even though the group has no valid law to operate under.

Nguyen, who has only led the commission for a short time, said he intends to visit with council members to see what can be done to get a law passed the commission can use.

He said he thought the city council wanted an ordinance "to protect every single individual citizen."

"But I really don't know what they want."

# Council Questions Phrase

By Jack Money  
Staff Writer

Oklahoma City Council members on Tuesday will consider changing the city Human Rights Commission's oath of office nearly six months after the commission changed its oath to include sexual orientation.

Some council members don't like the change because it requires commission appointees to swear they will work to fight against discrimination based on sexual orientation and discrimination for other reasons.

Council members also say the change in the group's bylaws was sneaked by them.

But Councilwoman Jackie Carey said she remembers the change being included in a normal report of commission minutes. The *Oklahoman* also reported the change of the commission's oath on July 27, 1994.

This is the first time, however, that an appointee to the commission will have to take the oath.

The appointee is Pat Cote, and the council member who appointed her to the commission is Jerry Foshee.

Foshee said this week he didn't think it was right that human rights commission members had to take a specialized oath.

He also said the oath was asking Cote to pledge something that both she and Ward 5 residents "were uncomfortable with."

"Before she can take her seat, they are asking her to give a completely different oath than any of the other commissioners have had to give," Foshee said. "Our appointees represent their wards — it is preventing her from her taking

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# Oath

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their seat. It slipped by everybody."

Foshee and Councilman Jack Cornett both asked for the change to be brought before the council Tuesday. They also want information about whether the council could change it back to a standard oath that they and appointees to other boards and commissions must take.

The human rights commission oath "is like asking us as council members to take an oath that we support (City Manager) Don Bown on every single issue," Foshee said. "It is just not fair."



# City Council Changes Rights Commission Oath

By Jack Money  
Staff Writer

The Oklahoma City Human Rights Commission had wanted to remain united in its quest for human rights for all, including homosexuals.

So they passed an oath asking commissioners to work toward that goal.

But their effort was halted last week by a united Oklahoma City Council.

Council members on Tuesday said they think human rights commission members should take the same oath of office as any other elected or appointed city officeholder.

The council voted to return the commission's oath of office to a standard form used by the group until last July.

"The same oath of office should be taken by everyone," said Councilman Mark Schwartz, who was supporting Councilman Jerry Foshee on changing the oath.

The commission changed its oath last year to require new commissioners to pledge they would fight against discrimination prompted by a variety of reasons, including sexual orien-

tation.

They made the change after the city council refused to consider a proposed law that would have given homosexuals status as a protected class of people.

Commission Chairman Cu Nguyen on Tuesday said the group had changed the oath as a way to reaffirm its commitment to provide protection from discrimination for any reason.

"Ideally, the commission should serve the public at large on all human rights issues," he said. "That was the idea, without singling out or promoting any certain group."

But some city council members felt it did promote protection for homosexuals. Foshee said his new appointee to the group wasn't comfortable with taking the oath because such a protection isn't supported by residents in his south Oklahoma City ward.

Nguyen said he had no problem with the council changing the oath back to its original form, because the commission serves as a recommending body to the council.

"It doesn't bother me," he said. "If you serve on this commission from your heart, that is more important than any oath of office."

# Disbanding Rights Panel Proposed

**By Jack Money**  
**Staff Writer**

In August, the International Association of Human Rights meeting will be in Oklahoma City.

But Oklahoma City may not have a Human Rights Commission to host the conference, because some city council members apparently want the group disbanded.

Councilman Frosty Peak said it is nothing personal, just that a shifting of funds is required by the city's dire financial condition as it looks at its budget for the next fiscal year.

His comments were met with disbelief by other council members, though.

They point out the commission and its staff of one, Coordinator Joyce Plunkett, is funded with federal Community Development Block Grant funds.

The elimination of the human rights program and the \$71,869 used for it might free up funds for other Community Development Block Grant activities, but would have no positive impact on the city's budget problems.

**Plunkett and Human**  
**See RIGHTS, Page 2**

# Rights

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Rights Commission Chairman Cu Nguyen, also are urging the council not to disband the group.

"Do you remember what occurred in Oklahoma City in 1988 for this council to re-establish the Human Rights Commission? It was after the cross burning at a church in northeast Oklahoma City and the desecration of a Jewish synagogue," Plunkett said.

"Since that time, the council has allowed the Oklahoma City Human Rights Commission to be proactive through conferences and community outreach in an attempt to address these issues."

Her remarks were echoed by Councilwoman Ann Simank, who said she was shocked Oklahoma City spends less mon-

ey for its human rights activities than any other regional city.

Examples include Kansas City, Mo., which spends about \$1 million; St. Louis and Tulsa, \$400,000 each; and Fort Worth, Texas, \$200,000.

"I think that we need to have tolerance in this world and that we need to be accepting. That doesn't mean we have to agree," Simank said.

But it may be because of a lack of tolerance and agreement that the commission is going to be disbanded in the first place.

The commission has functioned only in an educational capacity since 1993. Until then, it had conducted mediations for people involved in human rights disputes.

But it quit that work after being informed part of the law it operated under could be declared unconstitutional.

Attempts to fix the ordinance and expand the commission's powers have been met with vehement protests from the Christian right, which opposes giving protected status to homosexuals.

Several council members also have opposed the attempt

because they don't believe the city should extend protection to a group not recognized by the federal government.

The issue played a role in the most recent council elections.

Councilman Jerry Foshee said he believes the money being spent for the commission is unproductive because all it does is refer complaints to the state Human Rights Commission or the federal government's Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

"Basically, we are expending \$71,000 to refer cases," Foshee said.

Commission coordinator Plunkett responded, "As well as to conduct our educational forums."

Chairman Nguyen said he has pledged to work with the council to improve the commission and its community work.

Councilman Mark Schwartz asked the council to wait before eliminating the commission's funding or before disbanding the group.

Schwartz said the issue about whether to grant homosexuals protected status has been controversial in many places.

He said such decisions are best left to city councils, and that human rights groups should not be disbanded for advocating homosexual rights.

"I am not aware of any other human rights commission in any other city that has been disbanded because of debate over one particular group," he said, "and I hope that we don't send the kind of message that this action would send to our nation."

"That would be unfortunate."

# Council Compromises On Rights Commission

By Jack Money  
Staff Writer

"If Timothy McVeigh were on this council, he would vote to eliminate the Human Rights Commission."

That remark made by NAACP member Fannie Bates was one of the more caustic comments thrown at a minority of Oklahoma City Council members who wanted to eliminate the Oklahoma City Human Rights Commission Tuesday.

Councilmen Jerry Foshee and Frosty Peak were hoping at least for three other council members to join them in their quest to disband the commission and to kill its funding.

Council Members Jack Cornett and Frances Lowrey were supportive.

But the council member who turned out to be crucial in the fight was Guy

Liebmann.

Liebmann said he wanted to give the commission a chance as he suggested a compromise to save at least some funding for the group.

Peak was proposing eliminating about \$77,000 of federal Community Development Block Grant funds used to pay for the commission's staff.

Liebmann, however, proposed leaving \$20,000 in the block grant plan for the commission's use.

The council voted 5-4 to approve Liebmann's proposal and not disband the commission.

"They need an opportunity to show us what they can do," Liebmann said.

Before then, a variety of representatives from minority groups addressed the council about their plans to eliminate funding for the commission, as

well as the commission itself.

Bates, co-chairman of a political action committee of the Oklahoma City chapter of the NAACP, said the council was making a grave mistake.

Bates said financial backing for the state's human rights commission in the coming year has not been approved either.

"The governor's veto of the bill ... makes the need for the Oklahoma City Human Rights Commission even more acute."

She also said the city council will set the tone for what happens elsewhere in the state.

"If the Human Rights Commission dies, then with it will die the dreams of thousands of Oklahomans ... who do not fit into the White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant mode," she added.

Bates said the city council could fund the commission, and predicted that it would again someday even if funds were eliminated now.

"Do not underestimate our dedication."

Councilman Mark Schwartz has been a staunch supporter of the commission during fights about whether to give the group more power.

He also has supported the commission as it has attempted to convince the city council to adopt a new law that would declare a protected status for persons discriminated against because of their sexual orientation.

Schwartz on Tuesday voted to approve Liebmann's proposal along with Mayor Ron Norick and council members Ann Simank and Willa Johnson.

"I would rather have a little ... more so than nothing," he said.

The heavy criticism left council members who favored disbanding the group reeling.

"I am against hate, discrimination ... all of that," said Councilman Foshee, who was attempting to show that he and others should not be compared to McVeigh.

Two separate votes were taken on the human rights issue. Voting for the first proposal to cut funding from \$77,000 to \$20,000 in federal funding but to keep the commission were Mayor Ron Norick and council members Mark Schwartz, Ann Simank and Willa Johnson. Voting to eliminate all funding and end the commission were council members Frosty Peak, Jack Cornett, Frances Lowrey and Jerry Foshee.

# Human Rights Board to Mull Disbanding

**By Jack Money**  
**Staff Writer**

Oklahoma City Human Rights Commission members will consider disbanding their group at a special meeting today, according to the group's agenda.

Commissioners also will have an opportunity to vote on resolutions seeking restoration of funds and an ordinance making the organization legal.

The commission essentially has been powerless since 1993 when an ordinance similar to the one it had operated under was declared unconstitutional by a federal court.

Since then, attempts to pass a new ordinance have failed because the group sought to give people discriminated against because of their sexual orientation a way to seek help through city law.

Recently, the Oklahoma City Council slashed funding for the group because of a homosexual protection controversy. The funding shortage then forced the group's city-paid staff member to seek employment in another city office.

Today's commission meeting precedes a human rights convention that will come to Oklahoma City this month.

Commission Chairman Cu Nguyen said he doesn't know what the commission members will decide today, but added he intends to support the resolution that would ask for the restoration of full funding for the group.

He also said he thinks the proposal asking the commission to disband was dishonest because its author, a commissioner on the board, has asked to remain anonymous.

"It's pretty sleazy," Nguyen said. "I would be willing to listen to it if I knew who the author was, but when you submit a resolution anonymously there is something wrong with it."

"I don't accept that kind of tactic."

Nguyen said he will try to learn who submitted the proposal before it is discussed, and hinted he might have it stricken from the commission agenda if the author is not revealed.

He also said the city council demonstrated its resolve to at least have a commission by voting to give it a small amount of money earlier this year.

"It is unfortunate that some people who seem willing to serve on the commission want to abolish it," he said. "If the commissioners don't want to serve, they can get out."

"If they have some other motivation, that is too bad."

The meeting will be at 11 a.m. in the City Council chambers in City Hall, 200 N Walker.

# Human Rights Panel Argues Abolishment

By Jack Money  
Staff Writer

The Oklahoma City Human Rights Commission is sending resolutions to the city council asking for a workable human rights ordinance and the restoration of lost funding and city staff support.

A majority of the commissioners also want to see the group abolished after the first of 1996 if no satisfactory progress is made on those issues, they decided at a special meeting Thursday.

Commissioners Cu Nguyen and Leroy Kirk voted against the abolishment proposal. Commissioner C.E. Waddle left the meeting and was absent for the vote.

Kirk said he wouldn't support abolishment because Oklahoma City Councilman Mark Schwartz had sent letters to the commissioners asking them not to set a deadline on council passage of a new human rights ordinance.

Nguyen said he couldn't support an abol-



# Human Rights Law Proposed

By Jack Money  
Staff Writer

A proposed human rights ordinance now being discussed by the Oklahoma City Human Rights Commission would protect people discriminated against because of their sexual orientation even though it doesn't specifically say so.

The new law would offer that protection because it covers any class of people already protected from discrimination by local, state

or federal law.

Oklahoma City has two ordinances that make it a crime to commit acts of destruction against people or property because of their sexual orientation or because of their membership in other protected classes, officials have said.

Commissioner Bill Rogers said

this proposed ordinance accomplishes what he and some other members of the human rights commission have sought all along.

"It just doesn't use the dirty words," he said.

That doesn't mean the proposed law isn't controversial, though.

A committee of four commission-

ers who reviewed it this week couldn't agree on whether to send it to the entire human rights commission for consideration.

City officials said the group will make a report anyway to the entire commission at its next meeting, tentatively scheduled for sometime in early November.

## *Full Committee to Give Consideration*

They also said there probably will be an item on the commission's agenda to review the ordinance at the same meeting.

If approved by the commission and ultimately by the Oklahoma City Council, this law would make it unlawful to discriminate against people in matters of public accommodation, private clubs, housing, city employment or private employment.

Controversy about the sexual  
See **RIGHTS**, Page 2

# Rights

From Page 1

orientation issue has been a stumbling block in the passage of a new law for two years.

The commission has been searching for a new law the whole time because the laws the commission had been operating under before then may be unconstitutional.

Those laws, which

set up the human rights commission and which deal with hate crimes, are the ones that include sexual orientation as a protected class.

The laws need to be changed because they make it a special crime to commit certain acts against persons solely because of their race, gender, religion, age or sexual orientation.

City attorneys have said courts have ruled that other laws like Oklahoma City's infringe upon freedom of speech rights.

"These acts are unlawful, no matter what," said Assistant Municipal Counselor Rita Talley. "But you can't prohibit an act just because it is directed toward someone in a protected group."

Talley said the acts can be prohibited generally.

And, "After a finding of guilt, you can enhance penalties because your intended victim was a member of a protected class," she said.

In any new law, some human rights commissioners have wanted to include protection for persons discriminated against

because of their sexual orientation.

But other commissioners and a majority of the Oklahoma City Council have been opposed to the idea.

And time is running out for the group.

The commission passed a resolution earlier this year asking the city council to abolish the commission if it does not have a new law to function under by the end of this year.

Commissioner Rogers said the language change in the ordinance should help council members deal with its content.

He also said the current version of the proposed law makes other concessions to council members' concerns, including its effect on small companies and on the commission's role under the new law.

Employment by religious organizations also is exempted from the law.

"I think it is a real good law," Rogers said. "It is not as strong as I would like it, because we have excluded a whole lot of businesses.

"But you have to go with what you think has the best chance of selling."

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# Human Rights Discusse

By Jack Money  
Staff Writer

A proposed human rights ordinance now being discussed by the Oklahoma City Human Rights Commission would protect people discriminated against because of their sexual orientation, though it doesn't specifically say so.

The new law would offer protection because it covers a class of people already protected from discrimination by local, state or federal law.

Oklahoma City has two ordinances that make it a crime to commit acts of destruction against people or property because of their sexual orientation or because of their membership in other protected classes, officials have said.

Commissioner Bill Rogers said this proposed ordinance accomplishes what he and some members of the human rights commission have sought all along.

"It just doesn't use the words," he said.

That doesn't mean the proposed law isn't controversial, though.

A committee of four commissioners who reviewed it this week couldn't agree on whether to send it to the entire human rights commission for consideration.

City officials said the group will make a report anyway to the entire commission at its next meeting, tentatively scheduled for sometime in early November.

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If approved by the commission and ultimately by the Oklahoma City Council, this law would not.

See RIGHTS, Page 2

# Rights

From Page 1

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Controversy about the sexual orientation issue has been a stumbling block in the passage of a new law for two years.

The commission has been searching for a new law the whole time because the laws the commission had been operating under before then may be unconstitutional.

Those laws, which set up the human rights commission and which deal with hate crimes, are the ones that include sexual orientation as a protected class.

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By Jack Money  
Staff Writer

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That doesn't mean the proposed law isn't controversial, though.

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They also said there probably will be an item on the commission's agenda to review the ordinance at

the same meeting.

If approved by the commission and ultimately by the Oklahoma City Council, this law would make it unlawful to discriminate against people in matters of public accommodation, private clubs, housing, city employment or private employment.

Controversy about the sexual orientation issue has been a stumbling block in the passage of a new law for two years.

The commission has been searching for a new law the whole time because the laws the commission had been operating under before then may be unconstitutional.

Those laws, which set up the human rights commission and which deal with hate crimes, are the ones that include sexual orientation as a protected class.

The laws need to be changed because they make it a special crime to commit certain acts against persons solely because of their race, gender, religion, age or sexual orientation.

City attorneys have said courts have ruled that other laws like Oklahoma City's infringe upon freedom of speech rights.

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## City of Harrah Acquires Land For Industry

HARRAH — City officials recently acquired 155 acres of land for an industrial park.

Mayor Glenn West said the property will provide a significant potential for economic development and local jobs.

"This is one of the largest industrial parks in the area," West said. "This will allow us to immediately accommodate a variety of industrial needs."

Other improvements which are forecasted to provide more jobs and economic development include the new sewer extension line to SE 29 and Harrah Road, the Wes Watkins Reservoir being constructed in the area, and potential commercial development near SE 29 and Harrah Road.

Also, a new Dollar General store is opening in downtown Harrah, and housing and business development continues to grow.

The new Harrah Industrial Park is one-quarter mile east of the Reno and Harrah Road intersection. The park has easy access to Interstate 40 and NE 23, a five-lane highway from Harrah to Oklahoma City. Utilities, including fiber optic cables, are close to or on the site.

Harrah officials have worked for several years to purchase an industrial park to establish jobs in the area, West said.

"Local jobs will benefit existing businesses and the housing market," the mayor said. "Currently, many of our residents work in other cities, so they also do business there."

For information on the industrial park, call Harrah City Hall at 454-2951.

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# Human Rights Panel Discussion Derailed

By Jack Money  
Staff Writer

In the ongoing battle for a new human rights ordinance in Oklahoma City, only two facts are certain.

One is the city's human rights commission still does not have an ordinance to operate under.

The other is the commission only has until the end of the year to get one.

Beyond this, everything happening within the process to find a new ordinance is open to interpretation.

The commission does have a proposed law that it wants the Oklahoma City Council to consider.

But this latest proposal is controversial because it would extend protection from discrimination to homosexuals, an issue that has divided members of both the commission and the city council for two years.

An ordinance committee considered the proposal in October and deadlocked 2-2 about whether to send it to the entire human rights commission for consideration.

The commission was planning to consider the proposal this week, but could not because not enough members were at the meeting.

Six out of nine members were gone: The group needed at least five to be able to conduct official business.

The lack of a quorum left audience members and the three members of the commission who did attend the meeting frustrated.

They suggested some commission members deliberately stayed home so the commission would not be able to consider the proposed law.

The remarks about deliberately foiling the meeting seemed aimed at commissioners Brian McKye and Pat Cote.

Oklahoma City Human Rights Commission Chairwoman Berniece (Rasmussen) Eckert said they did not have "excused" absences, while the other four missing commissioners did.

Those commissioners were Cu Nguyen, Lyda Ruth Crandall Harrell, Leroy Kirk and commission Vice Chairman C.E. Waddle.

Eckert's remarks suggested McKye and Cote had not notified city officials they would be absent.

But both McKye and Cote said later the same day they had given advance notice to city officials that they probably would not be able to attend the meeting.

Cote said she told the commission's legal counsel, Rita Talley, she had been ill and would likely miss the meeting, and McKye said he notified other city officials before he left town last week that he would just be returning from an out-of-state trip and probably would not be able to attend.

"There was nothing concerted on my part" to prevent a quorum, he said.

The proposed ordinance the commission wanted to take up would protect people discriminated against because of their sexual orientation, even though it doesn't specifically say so.

The new law would offer that protection because it covers any class of people already protected from discrimination by local, state or federal law.

Oklahoma City has two ordinances that make it a crime to commit acts of destruction against people or property because of their sexual orientation or because of their membership in other protected classes.

Kathy McCallie, pastor of Epworth United Methodist Church, said, "It seems to me like there are people who are blocking it on purpose because they don't want it to pass."

Others besides McCallie also made comments about the proposed ordinance.

Speakers included Wayne Robinson, an Oklahoma City resident who is minister of the Channing Unitarian Church in Edmond; John Richards, a representative of the Oklahoma City chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; and Paul Thompson, co-chair of the Oklahoma Gay-Lesbian Political Caucus.

"Some commission members think what they are there for is to spare the city council the annoyance of dealing with the problem of the human rights concerns and problems of the citizens of Oklahoma City," Thompson said. "I don't know how you could have the process any more backward and upside down than that."

Eckert said she wasn't happy about the lack of a quorum.

She noted that the commission has another regularly scheduled meeting later this month.

"We are going to have an ordinance," she said. "Things change."

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# Lack of Quorum Derails Panel's Discussion

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# Council Denies Support For Human Rights Panel

**By Jack Money  
Staff Writer**

Oklahoma City Councilman Frosty Peak is among those on the council who want to disband the city's human rights commission.

But he doesn't have the votes yet.

"They are nonfunctional," Peak said of commission members.

However, Peak and other council members wanting to disband the commission did have enough votes on Tuesday and refused to provide the commission with administrative support.

City staff members have been wanting to seek proposals for the administrative sup-

port because the council previously had cut funding for the commission.

And as for the staffing proposal, Peak said, "I feel strongly we are wasting \$15,000 of taxpayers' money."

Peak was joined in voting against the measure by Jack Cornett, Frances Lowrey, Jerry Foshee and Guy Liebmann.

Liebmann, a limited supporter of the commission during budget hearings, said he is disappointed with a proposed ordinance that would protect

people from discrimination because of their sexual orientation.

The commission has been trying to get enough members in one place at one time to consider sending it on the city council, without success.

He said the ordinance is anti-business.

"I believe this should be deferred until the human rights commission gets a quorum and shows it wants to do something," he said.

Mayor Ron Norick

and council members Mark Schwartz, Ann Simank and Willa Johnson voted to allow proposals to be solicited.

Norick said he supported seeking the needed administrative support for the commission even though he did not support the proposed ordinance.

"I want to see if they can get their act together," he said.

# City Council Compromises On Panel

**By Jack Money  
Staff Writer**

**"If Timothy McVeigh were on this council, he would vote to eliminate the Human Rights Commission."**

That remark made by NAACP member Fannie Bates was one of the more caustic comments thrown at a minority of Oklahoma City Council members who wanted to eliminate the Oklahoma City Human Rights Commission Tuesday.

Councilmen Jerry Foshee and Frosty Peak were hoping at least for three other council members to join them in their quest to disband the commission and to kill its funding.

Council Members Jack Cornett and Frances Lowrey were supportive.

But the council member who turned out to be crucial in the fight was Guy Liebmann.

Liebmann said he wanted to give the commission a chance as he suggested a compromise to save at least some funding for the group.

Peak was proposing eliminating about \$77,000 of federal Community Development Block Grant funds used to pay for the commission's staff.

Liebmann, however, proposed leaving \$20,000 in the block

**See RIGHTS, Page 2**

# Rights

From Page 1

grant plan for the commission's use.

The council voted 5-4 to approve Liebmann's proposal and not disband the commission.

"They need an opportunity to show us what they can do," Liebmann said.

Before then, a variety of representatives from minority groups addressed the council about their plans to eliminate funding for the commission, as well as the commission itself.

Bates, co-chairman of a political action committee of the Oklahoma City chapter of the

NAACP, said the council was making a grave mistake.

Bates said financial backing for the state's human rights commission in the coming year has not been approved either.

"The governor's veto of the bill ... makes the need for the Oklahoma City Human Rights Commission even more acute."

She also said the city council will set the tone for what happens elsewhere in the state.

"If the Human Rights Commission dies, then with it will die the dreams of thousands of Oklahomans ... who do not fit into the White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant mode," she added.

Bates said the city council could fund the commission, and predicted that it would again someday even if funds were eliminated now.

"Do not underestimate our dedication."

Councilman Mark Schwartz has been a staunch supporter of the commission during fights about whether to give the group more power.

He also has supported the commission as it has attempted to convince the city council to adopt a new law that would declare a protected status for persons discriminated against because of their sexual orientation.

"I would rather have a little ... more so than nothing," he said.

The heavy criticism left council members who favored disbanding the group reeling.

"I am against hate, discrimination ... all of that," said Councilman Foshee, who was vigorously attempting to show that he and other council members should not be compared to McVeigh.

Two separate votes were taken on the human rights issue. Voting for the first proposal to cut funding from \$77,000 to \$20,000 in federal funding but to keep the commission were Mayor Ron Norick and council members Mark Schwartz, Ann Simank and Willa Johnson. Voting to eliminate all funding and end the commission were council members Frosty Peak, Jack Cornett, Frances Lowrey and Jerry Foshee.



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# Proposal Deferred On Oath

A proposal to change the oath of office for the city Human Rights Commission was deferred Tuesday by the Oklahoma City Council.

The Human Rights Commission changed its oath to include sexual orientation about six months ago.

Councilmen Jerry Foshee and Jack Cornett have asked that the oath be changed because it requires commission appointees to swear they will work to fight against discrimination based on sexual orientation.

## Mission



# City Council Changes Panel's Oath

By Jack Money  
Staff Writer

The Oklahoma City Human Rights Commission had wanted to remain united in its quest for human rights for all, including homosexuals.

So they passed an oath asking commissioners to work toward that goal.

But their effort was halted this week by a united Oklahoma City Council.

Council members on Tuesday said they think human rights commission members should take the same oath of office as any other elected or appointed city officeholder.

The council voted to return the commission's oath of office to a standard form used by the group until last July.

"The same oath of office should be taken by everyone," said Councilman Mark Schwartz, who was supporting Councilman Jerry Foshee on changing the oath.

The commission changed its oath last year to require new commissioners to pledge they would fight against discrimination prompted by a variety of reasons, including sexual orientation.

They made the change after the city council refused to consider a proposed law that would have giv-

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— Page 2

en homosexuals status as a protected class of people.

Commission Chairman Cu Nguyen on Tuesday said the group had changed the oath as a way to reaffirm its commitment to provide protection from discrimination for any reason.

"Ideally, the commission should serve the public at large on all human rights issues," he said. "That was the idea, without singling out or promoting any certain group."

But some city council members felt it did promote protection for homosexuals. Foshee said his new appointee to the group wasn't comfortable with taking the oath because such a protection isn't supported by residents in his south Oklahoma City ward.

Nguyen said he had no problem with the council changing the oath back to its original form, because the commission serves as a recommending body to the council.

"It doesn't bother me," he said. "If you serve on this commission from your heart, that is more important than any oath of office."

# Panel Strips Proposal, Sends It to Council

**By Jack Money**  
**Staff Writer**

A human rights ordinance is finally on its way to the Oklahoma City Council, but not before getting stripped of provisions that made it controversial.

A majority of Oklahoma City Human Rights Commission members voted this week to effectively deny any protection to persons discriminated against because of their sexual orientation.

They also decided to exempt private clubs, and businesses employing 50 people or less from having to comply with the law's other requirements, changes that several Oklahoma City Council members had earlier requested.

The commissioner asking for the sexual orientation change said it was a tough decision.

"I came from Vietnam," said Commissioner Cu Nguyen, "where I escaped from political persecu-

tion.

"So it is very difficult for me to ignore one group in the city in order to move forward for the rest of the other minority groups, but I am worried about the future of the commission."

In its original form, the proposed law would have covered anyone already protected by federal, state or local laws. It would have protected persons discriminated against because of their sexual orientation because the city now has a law on the books protecting those persons from hate crimes.

However, the commission this week deleted anyone protected by "local" laws.

In its current form, it still would make it unlawful to discriminate against people already protected by federal or state law in matters of public accommodation, housing, city employment or private em-

**See RIGHTS, Page 2**

# Rights Panel's Votes Detailed

The Oklahoma City Human Rights Commission took five votes during its meeting this week on its proposed human rights ordinance that the Oklahoma City Council will see soon.

The first vote was on whether to delete any minority group covered by local law (but not state and federal law) from protection under this proposal, basically those discriminated against because of sexual orientation.

Commissioners vot-

ed 6-3 to make the change.

Commissioners Cu Nguyen, C.E. Waddle, Lyda Ruth Crandall Harrell, Pat Cote, Brian McKye and Dick Hunter voted yes. Commissioners Pam Fleischaker, Louise Mitchner and commission Chairwoman Berniece (Rasmussen) Eckert voted against it.

The second and third votes were to amend which businesses would be exempt from the ordinance. Commissioner

Hunter wanted businesses that employ 100 or fewer persons exempt, a request that failed 5-4. Commissioners supporting Hunter were Harrell, Cote and McKye. Fleischaker, Mitchner, Eckert, Nguyen and Waddle were opposed.

A subsequent request to exempt businesses employing 50 or fewer persons passed 6-3, with commissioners Eckert, Fleischaker and Mitchner opposed to it.

The next vote was on whether to exempt private clubs from having to comply with the proposed law. It passed 6-3. Eckert, Fleischaker and Mitchner were opposed.

The last vote was taken to send the proposed law on to the Oklahoma City Council. It passed unanimously.

dinance to the council in order to avoid its own "drop dead" date of Dec. 31.

The commission set that date for asking the city council to dissolve it if commission members did not have a working ordinance by then.

"It has been three years, and we haven't made any progress," he said.

His response to Mitchner's concerns brought sharp words from commission Chairwoman Berniece (Rasmussen) Eckert.

"We are not here to please certain groups of people," she said. "It is not an ordinance unless it protects everyone."

Commissioner Pam Fleischaker said she appreciated Nguyen's proposal even though she could not support it.

"I feel that to not include our neighbors whose lifestyles and beliefs may be different than ours is insulting and insensitive," she said. "It makes almost a ... mockery of human rights."

"This country was (started) on the principle that the minority ... needs protection from the tyranny of the majority."

Passage of the ordinance sets the stage for council discussion on it sometime in December.

Since persons discriminated against because of their sexual orientation are no longer an issue, it is likely the council will pass the ordinance. However, it also may increase the numbers of public and private businesses which do not have to comply.

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