

County of Tompkins

Local Law No. _____ of 2019

Section 1. This is a Local Law amending Article 26 of the Charter to better describe the roles and responsibilities of the Human Rights Department and the Human Rights Commission.

Section 2. Article 26 of the Tompkins County Charter is hereby amended to read as follows:

Article 26. Office of Human Rights/Human Rights Commission

§ C-26.00. Office of Human Rights; Director, Human Rights; appointment; qualifications; powers and duties.

There shall be an Office of Human Rights (“Office”) headed by a Director of Human Rights (“Director”) appointed by the County Administrator, following consultation with the Tompkins County Human Rights Commission (“Commission”), and subject to confirmation by the Tompkins County Legislature. The Director shall be appointed on the basis of professional experience and other qualifications appropriate to the responsibilities of the office. The Director shall be directly responsible to the County Administrator for the implementation of policies established by the Tompkins County Legislature.

The Director shall have the power to appoint such deputies, assistants, and employees of the department as may be necessary to perform the duties of the Office and as shall be authorized by the Tompkins County Legislature. All deputies, assistants, and employees of the department shall be directly responsible to the Director.

§ C-26.01. Director of Human Rights; powers and duties.

The powers and duties of the Director shall be to:

- (a) Educate the public on issues involving human rights;
- (b) Receive and respond to inquiries regarding human rights;
- (c) Refer complaints of discrimination and other issues to other organizations where deemed appropriate;
- (d) Advise persons on how to file complaints with appropriate state and federal agencies dealing with discrimination and, in appropriate circumstances, provide facilities and equipment to assist persons in filing such complaints;
- (e) Speak on behalf of the Office to various local, state, and federal organizations to implement the educational function of the Office and the Commission within the community;

(f) On or before March 1st of each year the Director shall make an annual report to the County Legislature for the immediately preceding calendar year covering generally the work of the Department. The Director shall make such other reports at such times as may be required by the County Legislature, the County Administrator, or any applicable law. Copies of all reports shall be filed with the Clerk of the Legislature;

(g) Submit regular reports to the County Administrator and the Commission outlining the work of the Office. The report will include a summary of the Office's outreach activities, trends or important issues, and any other information deemed important by the Director. All case information shall be without names of involved parties or any other identifiable characteristic;

Except as otherwise provided in this Charter, the Office shall have all the powers and perform all the duties now or hereafter conferred or imposed by applicable law upon it.

§ C-26.02. Office of Human Rights; powers and duties.

The powers and duties of the Office shall be to:

(a) Foster mutual respect and understanding among diverse groups such as, but not limited to, those characterized by race, religion, nationality, and sexual orientation in the community;

(b) **Conduct** studies and surveys of community relationship as in the judgment of the Office will aid in effectuating the general purpose of the Office;

(c) Inquire into incidents of tension and conflict among or between various diverse groups such as, but not limited to, those characterized by race, religion, nationality, and sexual orientation and make recommendations or take such action as may be designed to alleviate such tensions and conflict;

(d) Conduct and recommend such educational programs as, in the judgment of the Office, will increase goodwill among community members and open new opportunities into all phases of community life for community members;

(e) Advise persons on how to file complaints with appropriate state and federal agencies dealing with discrimination and, in appropriate circumstances, provide facilities and equipment to assist persons in filing such complaints and, in matters and complaints within the jurisdiction of the Office, but outside the jurisdiction of Federal and State agencies, **investigate, as may be needed**, and prepare its own plans with a view to reducing and eliminating such alleged discrimination through the processes of conference, conciliation, and persuasion;

(f) Issue human-rights related publications and reports to carry out the purposes of this Article;

(g) Enlist the cooperation and participation of the various racial, religious and nationality groups, community organizations, industry and labor organizations, media and mass

communication, fraternal and benevolent associations, and other groups in an educational campaign devoted to fostering among the diverse groups of the community mutual esteem, justice and respect for human rights, equity and opening new opportunities into all phases of community life for all individuals.

§ C-26.03. Human Rights Commission

There shall be a Human Rights Commission. Article 12-D of the General Municipal Law provides State enabling legislation for the Commission.

The Commission shall:

- (a) Foster understanding and respect for human rights in Tompkins County;
- (b) Encourage equality; discourage discrimination, advocate for fair and equal treatment; and
- (c) Serve as an advisory board to the Office and to the Tompkins County Legislature.

§ C-26.04. Human Rights Commission; composition; appointment; term.

The Commission shall be composed of fifteen (15) members. Each of these shall be appointed by the Tompkins County Legislature for a term of three (3) years and may be reappointed. The membership should consist of individuals who possess demonstrated experience and knowledge in the promotion and protection of civil and human rights, and elimination of unlawful discrimination. Members shall be residents of Tompkins County.

§ C-26.05. Human Rights Commission; roles and responsibilities.

The roles and responsibilities of the Commission and/or the Commissioners, under the aforementioned legislation are as follows:

- (a) Perform studies and surveys of community relationship as in the judgment of the Commission will aid in effectuating the general purpose of the Commission;
- (b) Refer complaints of alleged discrimination to the Office;
- (c) To conduct and recommend such educational programs, that in the judgment of the Commission, will increase goodwill in the community and encourage opportunities for involvement in all phases of community life for everyone;
- (d) To offer leadership that promotes positive change as it relates to civil and human rights;
- (e) To encourage and stimulate agencies and advisory boards under the jurisdiction of the Tompkins County Legislature to take action that will fulfill the purposes of Article 12-D of the General Municipal Law;

- (f) Advise the Tompkins County Legislature on issues involving human rights.
- (g) Advise the Director of The Office of Human Rights on operations of the Office.
- (h) To submit an annual report to the Tompkins County Legislature and the Office and to report as appropriate to the relevant standing committee of the Tompkins County Legislature;
- (i) Upon approval of the County Legislature or the relevant standing committee of the Tompkins County Legislature, raise and/or disburse funds that are not included in the Office's departmental budget and are necessary to support the work of the Commission.

Section 3. This law shall take effect immediately upon filing with the Secretary of State.