

Statement for Public Hearing Regarding Proposed Ordinance for Unpublished or Venue-specific Bar and Establishment Dress Codes.

Robin R. Russell, resident Ward 9, Minneapolis, MN

On the surface, this ordinance seems like a benign and uncontroversial change to policy. More careful thought raises concerns that should be considered before adopting this ordinance.

In a recent weekly update from CM Chavez, the rationale for this ordinance is stated as: **Anecdotal** evidence shows that **certain** establishments in Minneapolis **appear** to be using **supposed** dress codes to arbitrarily discriminate [based on protected class].

In the proposed Ordinance Presentation it says: Entrance into certain establishments is **often** granted or denied based on stereotypes...

So which is it...a vague few that anecdotally, supposedly appear to do the wrong thing, or do we have a real, demonstrated and documented problem with unposted dress codes in Minneapolis?

Protected Class discrimination: Protections for discrimination based on protected class are already in place under Federal and State laws.

Double jeopardy: If there is no evidence to substantiate a civil rights claim of discrimination, is it assumed the proprietor could still be held responsible under the licensing ordinance? Would their business/liquor license be at risk? Is this not a double jeopardy scenario?

It is known by at least some on the dais that this ordinance is grounded in one individual's protest against an unpublished dress code at a certain establishment banning sweatpants at times of high attendance. * While we do not know the true extent of the impact of dress codes, published or not, in our community we do know that in recent years a white man concealed a weapon in his sweat clothes and killed a brown man inside a bar. Hear me now...WHITE PEOPLE WEAR SWEAT PANTS. To put this ordinance forward as a protected class discrimination issue is a red herring from the real issue which is, in a culture of gun violence do the proprietors of small businesses in our community have the tools they need to keep our social gathering spaces safe while operating an economically viable business.

Protection from direct threat to health and safety: *How will it be determined if a dress code is utilized by an establishment to reduce the risk of threat to safety thereby exempting it from posting under this ordinance.* The proposed ordinance requires an interpretation from the City Attorney of the Public Accommodations Statute, Subdivision 4 Direct Threat to Health and Safety which states "An entity is not required to permit an individual to participate in and benefit from the services, and accommodations of the entity if the individual poses a direct threat to the safety of others."

Security Science experts: Did any of the proposed ordinance's authors consult any Security Science experts or was any research done to learn about the value, harm, or use of dress codes as a tool to manage the environment in establishments that serve the public?

***Howard Dotson, permanent resident of Maple Grove, MN** *I offer an alternative driving force behind this proposed ordinance. A white man (Howard Dotson) with a permanent residence outside the City of Minneapolis, was removed from the premises of an establishment in Northeast Minneapolis after he interfered with security staff as they were focused on managing a safety threat posed by another patron. Subsequently Dotson launched a 2+ year-long expansive public and social media campaign targeting the establishment and owner by name. He reportedly lobbied Black men to sign his 'petition'; reportedly some were offered drinks at a bar in exchange for signatures, others were approached in other public places such as the local grocery store. From the alleged list of 55 Black men there was one who filed a complaint with the Minneapolis Office of Civil Rights, however, that complaint was found to be unsubstantiated.*

On July 15, 2025 Dotson used his two-minutes at a BHZ public hearing for a liquor license for another bar to publicly defame the target of his smear campaign by name. Chair Osman allowed him to continue until CMs Rainville and Ellison stopped Dotson's speech as inappropriate for the forum.

Now we see the fruition of Dotson's campaign with the presentation of this ordinance. I am concerned that it is being authored without proper due diligence by those who are and should be champions of the interests of the BIPOC community. Without such due diligence unintended consequences of this ordinance could put the BIPOC community at greater risk.

Howard Dotson is a clout seeker who inserts himself into situations that have the potential to put him in the limelight. He is a self-proclaimed street chaplain who has no current, discoverable appointments to serve as a chaplain with any organization or entity. As such, there is nobody providing oversight to his interactions with the traumatized people in our

community. His practices are questionable, possibly predatory. For example, he was present at the Annunciation shooting site and told a national news reporter that he gave a lot of hugs. Hugging is not considered a best practice of chaplaincy or any other therapeutic professional as it risks crossing boundaries with people in a traumatized state.

[Interfaith chaplain Howard Dotson comforted children and parents at Annunciation Church as they awaited word on who was killed in the Minneapolis school shooting. He says he believes the shooter had a "personal vendetta" against the school. MORE: <https://www.newsnationnow.com/us-news/midwest/active-shooter-minneapolis-catholic-schol/> | NewsNation | Facebook](#)

Howard Dotson has a history of defaming people and bringing forward frivolous lawsuits. He currently has a \$400,000 judgement against him resulting from a defamation case brought by Bishop Harding Smith in Brooklyn Park.

If there is any legal, ethical, or moral way for the Minneapolis City Council to not entertain interactions with Howard Dotson, in the best interest of the community I believe that is the path to follow.

Public Comment

Row 3

Date Created	08/17/26 10:26 PM
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Name	Madeline Esch
Issue/File	2026-00806
Comment	I support the Dress Code Posting Requirement Ordinance, file 2026-00806. My name is Madeline Esch. I am a Ward 10 resident and an organizer with Tea Time, a Minnesota nonprofit serving transgender people. Unposted, vague, or selectively enforced dress codes create opportunities for arbitrary exclusion. This can particularly affect transgender and gender-nonconforming people when employees make assumptions about how someone of a particular gender is supposed to dress. These practices can also compound discrimination experienced by other historically marginalized communities. Requiring establishments to post their dress codes is a modest and practical transparency measure. It gives customers notice before entering, gives employees a consistent written standard, and makes it harder for a supposed dress code to be invented or selectively applied at the door. Posting a policy does not prevent a business from maintaining reasonable rules. It simply helps ensure that those rules are visible, consistent, and accountable. I also encourage the City to ensure that dress codes cannot be enforced differently based on a person's perceived race, sex, gender identity, gender expression, disability, or other protected characteristic. Please support and advance ordinance 2026-00806.
Ward	Ward 10
Meeting Type	City Council
Council Committee	Business, Housing & Zoning (BHZ)
Independent Body	
Board/Commission	
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From: [Grant Johnson via Smartsheet](#)
To: [Council Comment](#)
Subject: Public Comment: Sean Hanson
Date: Friday, August 14, 2026 11:07:21 PM



Public Comment: Sean Hanson

Date: 08/14/26, 11:05 PM

2026-00806

I (along with the rest of my current household) moved to Northeast Minneapolis in March 2022 - and we decided to look at some local establishments to see what they were like. I was 22 at this time.

We (my friend group and I) walked into The Moose Bar and Grille, not knowing anything about it. Since March 2022 was still during the height of COVID, I was wearing my a face mask. The moment I walked in, I was instantly shouted at to "take it off!" This is the only time I've ever been told to take off a mask (has not happened before or since), so I was very taken aback by it. I do not remember seeing a dress code written anywhere, but I also wasn't necessarily looking as I was new to the area.

I would like to ask the Minneapolis City Council to vote in favor of Ordinance 2026-00806 to require all establishments to publish a written dress code at their main entrances. A simple "no face coverings" rule listed anywhere would have sufficed here and cleared up any confusion.

Thank you.

Ward: Ward 3

Business, Housing & Zoning (BHZ)

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