



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 11/4/2025

File #: 25-1257

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Clerk of the Board

Agenda Section: Departmental

Vote Requirement: Majority

SUBJECT:

Report on the Humboldt County Human Rights Commission

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Receive and file the report; and
2. Take appropriate action as directed by the Board.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

This action supports the following areas of your Board's Strategic Plan.

Area of Focus: Core Services/Other

Strategic Plan Category: 9999 - Core Services/Other

DISCUSSION:

At the January 7, 2025, Board of Supervisors meeting, the Board directed the Clerk of the Board's office to review the Humboldt County Human Rights Commission and bring back recommendations about its membership, the commission's focus and provide any other information to help the Board determine if the commission needed to be disbanded or changed to meet the Board's needs and expectations.

Humboldt County Human Rights Commission Background

The Humboldt County Human Rights Committee was formed by Ordinance 530 titled "Ordinance Establishing the Humboldt County Commission on Human Rights" on Oct. 13, 1965 (Attachment 1). This included establishing membership at 11 total members with two being appointed by each district Supervisor and one member being at-large appointments for a three-year term. The purpose of this committee was "to aid in the eradication of discrimination in Humboldt County, with particular reference to housing, employment, education and public accommodation." In addition, it established a monthly meeting schedule and a removal of members with a failure to attend clause.

On Aug. 2, 1966, Ordinance No. 572 titled "Ordinance Amending Ordinance 530 so as to Change the Provision Regarding the Quorum for Meeting of the Humboldt County Commission on Human Rights" was approved (Attachment 2). This ordinance established that quorum shall consist of five members of the commission.

On March 18, 1969, Ordinance 663 titled "Ordinance Amending Ordinance 530 to Enlarge Membership of the Humboldt County Commission on Human Rights and to Provide for Staggered Terms of Office" was approved (Attachment 3). This ordinance changed the membership to two members appointed per district Supervisor and 5 members appointed as at-large. It also implemented

staggered terms.

On April 22, 1975, the Board approved Ordinance 1023 titled “Ordinance Establishing Humboldt County Commission on Human Rights and Repealing Ordinance Nos. 530, 572,663” (Attachment 4). This ordinance captured the previous requirements and extended terms to four years each. It also created a list of responsibilities of the commission and a list of obligations. It gave the commission a more direct and purposeful charge.

On Jan. 13, 1981, the Board approved Ordinance 1444 titled “Amending Sections 221-4, 224-2, 225-2 and 228-4 of the Humboldt County Code, Changing Membership on the Humboldt County Animal Control Advisory Committee, the Humboldt County Fish and Game Advisory Committee, the Humboldt County Forestry Committee and the Humboldt County Commission on Human Rights” (Attachment 5). This codified the ordinances into the County Code.

On Oct. 6, 1998, the Board approved Ordinance 2177 titled “An Ordinance of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Humboldt Amending Section 228-4, of the Humboldt County Code Changing Membership of the Humboldt County Commission on Human Rights” (Attachment 6). This changed the membership to three members being appointed by each district Supervisor and removing all at-large appointments.

And lastly, on Feb. 25, 2003, the Board approved Ordinance 2294 titled “An Ordinance of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Humboldt Amending Sections 228-3, 228-6 and 228-7 of the Chapter 8 of Division 2 of Title II of the Humboldt County Code, Changing the Purpose, Responsibility and Obligation of the Humboldt County Commission on Human Rights” (Attachment 7). This ordinance adjusted terminology and focus from the 1960’s to the 2000’s. In summary, its purpose now stated, “The purpose of the Commission on Human Rights is to promote tolerance and mutual respect between all persons, and to promote positive human relationships for the purpose of insuring public peace, health, safety and the general welfare of all.” It also updated language for the “responsibilities” and “obligations” section of the code.

Chapter 8 of the Humboldt County Code (Attachment 8) captures all these changes and is current for this commission.

Review Process and Data Received

To evaluate the Humboldt County Human Rights Commission, the Clerk of the Board attended a monthly meeting and discussed possible changes with the commission. The Clerk of the Board reviewed the commission’s purpose and structure and researched attendance and quorum challenges. The Clerk of the Board also interviewed each member of the Board of Supervisors and reviewed the current commission membership composition, purpose and function. The Humboldt Human Rights Commission also began to invite members of your Board to attend their meetings as guests to keep your Board updated on items they are reviewing.

Membership

Membership on this commission has experienced some quorum challenges. There are currently 15 members, and a quorum requires only five members be present. There are currently three vacant seats on the commission. Feedback received about the number of the commissioners from the Board suggested possible revisions to the membership as there has been high turnover of appointments. Some members of the Board of Supervisors have expressed that the consideration of reduction of members on this commission may be helpful. However, the commission itself does not want a reduction in membership, but instead a more robust recruitment process.

The commission has several subcommittees and projects that need people to participate. By reducing membership, the fear is that the important work would be curtailed. The Clerk of the Board has taken added steps for recruitment by listing the vacancy notice on the consent agenda item even though they are specific Board appointments. The Clerk of the Board has worked with the County Administrative Office’s Public Information Specialist to reach a broader audience for recruitment. This is an ongoing effort.

Other Challenges

While there were some basic meeting structure and agenda management challenges, those have been advised on by the Clerk of the Board and will continue to be monitored through this transformation. Some video teleconferencing challenges have occurred, such as unwelcomed zoom interruptions, and the Clerk of the Board’s staff has advised the commission on how to address this. There are occasions that the meeting time and space has become an issue due to the cost of building security as the commission is not funded by the Board and the county does not offer other meeting space outside of business hours. The commission has asked for assistance with Spanish interpretation for the Zoom component and for the message line translations. The Clerk of the Board is

looking into these issues and is continuing their work with the commission for resolve.

The Humboldt County Human Rights Commission brings agenda items to the Board of Supervisors, including letters of support and discussion items of needs or concerns in the county through the assistance of the Clerk of the Board's office. They also have provided their required annual report to the Board. They would like more direction from the Board if there were areas of investigation that they can assist the Board with.

The Human Rights Commission has its own budget held in the General Fund that is managed by the County Administrative Office. Monies deposited in the account are revenues collected from trainings, special events and donations. Monies deposited to this fund can be used for materials, security or hosting events. Their current account balance is approximately \$2,950 for Fiscal Year 2025-26.

Conclusion:

The Humboldt County Human Rights Commission is a long-standing committee who are invested in and have compassion for the people of Humboldt County. The commission has an engaged membership who track local issues and are very knowledgeable about state legislation and situations that could affect Humboldt. The commission has several subcommittees that present at their meetings and the commission engages with guest speakers relating to escalating topics. They have strong leadership and robust engagement with the Clerk of the Board's office.

Your Board may consider changing the number of commission members, direct the Clerk of the Board to explore other options, or leave the commission as is.

The Board may also suggest other changes to the commission's responsibilities and obligations. Any changes that the Board of Supervisors would like to make to the Human Rights Commission will have to be done through a new ordinance and follow the ordinance protocol of two agenda items in the future.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

General Fund

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is minimal financial impact to reviewing and updating the Humboldt County Human Rights Commission. Costs associated with this item are primarily in staff time to evaluate and prepare the staff report.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

None

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Your Board could direct the Clerk of the Board to further explore other options.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Ordinance 530
2. Ordinance 572
3. Ordinance 663
4. Ordinance 1023
5. Ordinance 1444
6. Ordinance 2177
7. Ordinance 2294
8. Humboldt County Code - Chapter 8, Page 41

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Meeting of: Jan. 7, 2025

File No.: File #25-95