

# • Human Rights Commission

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- TO: Humboldt County Board of Supervisors
- FROM: Humboldt County Human Rights Commission

- **ANNUAL REPORT TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

- July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020

- **A change of leadership beginning July 1, 2020**

Chair, Lelehnia Dubois

Vice Chair, Eddie Morgan

Secretary, Steven Loreus

Treasurer, Mary Lyons

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

- Monthly meetings of the Human Rights Commission (HRC) continue to be held at 5pm the first Thursday of each month in Conference Room A at the Humboldt County Courthouse. Understandably, this year things were disrupted by COVID-19. Our April meeting was cancelled and our May meeting became a ZOOM and YouTube hybrid. At all times the public was able to access the Commission.
- The Commission adheres to the Brown Act and public comment is scheduled on the agenda and is open to members of the public wishing to address the Commission. During this time, as noted above, some obstacles were overcome through technology.
- All monthly regular HRC meeting agendas are submitted to the Clerk of the Board for distribution to the Supervisors, posted at the Courthouse, and available on the HRC website. Regularly, we request the Times-Standard and additional media to publish meeting announcements with a brief description of topics to be covered. During this fiscal year, members of the public attended all regular meetings. The news media attended several of our meetings including our ZOOM/YouTube May meeting.

- Although we have considered changes to our location and schedule of meetings, we thus far have concluded the present location and schedule best meet the needs of the Commission and the public. Consideration is being given to further remote participation by the public and Commissioners who live in rural parts of the County.
- During this fiscal year, the HRC conducted eleven regular meetings held at the Courthouse. In addition, nearly a dozen ad hoc committee meetings, two special meetings, and two community forums were held. For the first time, our most recent meetings were remotely accessible by the public, using a combination of Zoom, Facebook, and YouTube. Much of the focus of these meetings was centered on County funding of our Human Trafficking effort which has resulted in the establishment of a resource link for victims to reach needed assistance. This resource link was established with funding, approved by the Board of Supervisors, from the people of the County of Humboldt.
- The Commission still believes it would be useful and wise to do a semi-annual report one in July, which is traditional, and one in February or March which we favor as well. Although previously supported by the Supervisors, we have not initiated this practice. It is our hope that this coming spring we will launch the more frequent reporting to the Supervisors.

**2019-2020 Officers**

Chair, Jim Glover

Vice Chair, Erin Rowe

Secretary, Philip Anzada

Treasurer, Mary Lyons

**COMMISSION MEMBERS- as of June 30, 2018**

DISTRICT 1: Byrd Lochtie, Carol Larsen, Jim Glover

DISTRICT 2: Larry Miller, **TWO VACANCIES**

DISTRICT 3: Steven Loreus, **TWO VACANCIES**

DISTRICT 4: Jonnie Rush, Mary Lyons, Eddie Morgan

DISTRICT 5: Lelehnia Dubois, Erin Rowe, Toby Vanlandingham

We experienced departures for the following reasons: resignation due to relocation out of area (1). We wish to note again, the continuing absence of representation from the Second District. This is contributing to our belief that technology could assist us in providing that representation while not expecting a person to drive long distances to be present at a

meeting. Despite the challenges of several long term vacancies, the Commission pursued an aggressive agenda for the citizens of Humboldt County.

## ISSUES HIGHLIGHTS

This fiscal year has been exhaustive in logistics and in terms of subject matter. Among the issues addressed are human trafficking, civil rights/diversity, homelessness, a kindness campaign, violent rhetoric and threats of physical attack, race relations, cultural awareness, inmate rights, and outreach to the general public. The Standing Committee on the Sanctuary Ordinance regularly monitors for local compliance with the ordinance.

## OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

**Website:** We have continued to provide updated information to our website <https://www.humboldthumanrights.org/> throughout the year. On this site we retain all YouTube recordings of meetings as well as noting various grants awarded in the community.

Access our webpage: [www.co.humboldt.ca.us/HumanRightsCom/](http://www.co.humboldt.ca.us/HumanRightsCom/)

**Facebook:** We continue outreach with a Facebook social media site that has a number of followers. After consultation with the County Administrator's Office and County Technology Services, we were able to inform the public of timely events and issues. This is now the primary route of engagement for people seeking assistance due to their experience with Human Trafficking. Our #humboldtkindness effort has had much activity on this site as well.

**Synopsis of Projects and Participation in Local Events:** Our efforts for the fiscal year were focused on long term issues. The following is only a snapshot of significant activities throughout the year. Much week-to-week and month-to-month work took place that is not listed here.

- **July-**Secured the second major funding of grant monies earmarked to support data collection and education on the subject of human trafficking within our county. Met with LECAH to establish continuing relationship and introduce the #humboldtkindness campaign.
- **August-**Continued a multi-year inquiry into Human Trafficking. Advertised for applications for the Human Trafficking Fund administered by the Humboldt Area Foundation. Human Trafficking Stakeholders meeting hosted at the Humboldt Area Foundation individuals and groups interested in applying for monetary grants to work in the area of Human Trafficking.
- **September-** Presented 2018-2019 Annual Report to Board of Supervisors. Committee established (at citizen request) to study Criminalization of Homeless People. Hate-Speech committee begins work with survey-monkey project.
- **November-** BOS acknowledges benefit of semi-annual reports in future.

- **December**-Guest presentation by Jennifer Eichstedt on local race relations. Had representatives at every City Council (except Ferndale) meeting and the Board of Supervisors observing Human Rights Awareness Month. Commission issued first requests to cities on Public Records Act information related to homeless issues.
- **January**-Tabled along with other local groups at the MLK Celebration at the Adorni Center.
- **February**- Continued supplying printed materials for businesses to state their welcome of respectful and lawful use of their facilities. These laminated cards are now posted in dozens of local businesses and agencies. Funding this effort was from the McLean Foundation. DHHS continues to assume responsibility for Resource Cards, but consults with Human Rights Commission. In February, a new version of Spanish language cards became available.
- **March**- Initial plans to do an outreach meeting in the Fortuna area had to be cancelled due to the onset of COVID-19 pandemic.
- **April**-Regular meeting had to be cancelled, but two special meetings were conducted to finalize funding for Human Trafficking grant recipients. These meetings were by telephone conference calls and ZOOM.
- **May**-Nominations were received for officers for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2020.
- **June**-Elections were held. With Jim Glover no longer eligible to serve as chair, due to term limits, Lelehnia DuBois was elected Chair, Eddie Morgan elected Vice Chair, Steven Loreus elected secretary, and Mary Lyons, reelected Treasurer.

## **PUBLIC CONTACT AND INPUT**

For years the Human Rights Commission has maintained a message line phone. Message line activity is monitored by Commission volunteers every day of the week. Calls range from requests for Resource Cards by agencies to requests for help from citizens. Since many of those cards were utilized by County departments, most of their supply comes from DHHS. We provide cards to those outside the County government structure. The help requests include concerns about unsafe housing concerns, unfair labor practices, law enforcement complaints, racial or ethnic discrimination, homeless-related issues, mental health issues and more.

As noted above, the resource cards reach thousands of individuals and thus we have seen a decline in our message line activity, but the service is greatly appreciated by those using this resource. Over the course of the year, an average of eight calls per month has been received with follow-ups coming from our Commissioner/volunteers. A data entry form has been implemented to properly log and follow-up on calls received. This information is kept on our shared-drive system.

## **RESPONSES TO COMMUNITY CONCERNS**

We have been greatly appreciative of financial support from the Board of Supervisors for the Human Trafficking Fund. Although we do not currently have a budget request before the Board, we trust you will be amenable to one in the near future. With County resources and

operations in turmoil for the last couple of months, it seemed a prudent move not to request at this time.

### **COMMENTS DIRECTED TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

Commissioner turnover will always be a factor due to age, activities, work, etc. The greatest possible diversity in membership is something the Commission and the Board of Supervisors should maintain. We attempt to encourage people to become commissioners or to at least follow our activities. We also encourage our Supervisors to be proactive in seeking out people who can represent various viewpoints in their respective districts. Each supervisor and all of the Commission must work to maintain adequate representation of community members in all parts of the County. We are hopeful an outcome of the current pandemic and its effects on meetings generally will be the possibility of permanently making available the equipment necessary with cameras and computer capabilities for members of our commission who may be away on travel to participate from their location (consistent with the Brown Act) in Conference Room A. This could be a possible solution to the long-existing vacancies in our more remote areas. Any such accommodation would benefit the Human Rights Commission, but also any other commission or committee using that space. We also hope modifications to the Brown Act might afford easier participation in a rural county such as ours.

We always try to be respectful in our relationship with the Board of Supervisors. In doing so, we will continue to consult, advise, and discuss issues of concern to the entire community.

### **APPRECIATION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The Human Rights Commission wishes to acknowledge and thank those who have contributed to making our work possible.

- **The Board of Supervisors** for the repeated appropriation of funds to collect data and make recommendations related to Human Trafficking.
- **The McLean Foundation** for continuing financial support that enabled us to conduct ongoing contacts of outreach and education in the rural areas of Humboldt County.
- **The Department of Health and Human Services** for staff support for the updating and printing of the HRC Resource Cards.
- **Sharrone Blanck** for her continuing advocacy for missing and exploited indigenous people and the furtherance of racial equity.
- **Members of the Southern Humboldt community** for their caring concern for their fellow citizens and specifically, SHO.
- **Access Humboldt** for their willingness to work with the Commission in a variety of ways to promote positive action within our community.

- **Jorge Matias** for his consistent and active promotion of health and fitness among Humboldt's LatinX community.
- **Sheriff Honsal** for his candid conversations on the subjects of civil rights and diversity, homelessness, and human trafficking.
- **Fernando Paz** of Humboldt State University for his efforts to organize an orientation program for Spanish-speaking students new to our rural county.
- **Katrina Taylor** for her energy and determination to serve people who have experienced the pain of human trafficking.
- **Previous Commission Member**, Philip Anzada for his service as Secretary for the last two years..
- **Numerous others**, working for the benefit of all members of this community on the basis of race, economics, recognition of indigenous heritage, and so much more.

Respectfully Submitted,

Humboldt County Human Rights Commission

James Glover, Chair 2019-2020