



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

AGENDA ITEM NO.
M-1

For the meeting of: September 6, 2016

Date: August 8, 2016
To: Board of Supervisors
From: Clerk of the Board
Subject: Humboldt County Human Rights Commission Annual Report

RECOMMENDATION(S): That the Board of Supervisors hear the report and take appropriate action, if required.

SOURCE OF FUNDING: N/A

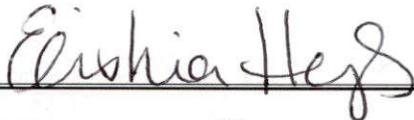
DISCUSSION: Each year the Human Rights Commission prepares and submits to the Board of Supervisors an annual report on their activities for the year. Jim Glover, Chairman of the Human Rights Commission will present the Report.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: N/A

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT: N/A

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS: Board discretion.

ATTACHMENTS: Cover Letter and Annual Report – July 01, 2015 to June 30, 2016.

Prepared by Kathy Hayes  Signature 
REVIEW: Auditor _____ County Counsel _____ Personnel _____ Risk Manager _____ Other _____

TYPE OF ITEM:
____ Consent
____ Departmental
____ Public Hearing
XX Other Afternoon Discussion Item (15 minutes)
PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT
Upon motion of Supervisor _____ Seconded by Supervisor _____
Ayes _____
Nays _____
Abstain _____
Absent _____

Per Order of the Chair

Board Order No. _____
Meeting of: _____

and carried by those members present, the Board hereby approves the recommended action contained in this Board report.
Dated: Sept. 6, 2016
By: 
Kathy Hayes, Clerk of the Board

(605-41)

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BOARD OF SUPERVISOR

AUG 08 2016
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Human Rights Commission

825 Fifth Street, Room 1A, Eureka, CA 95501 | 707.268.2548 | hhr@co.humboldt.ca.us

August 5, 2016

Mark Lovelace, Chairperson
Humboldt County Board of Supervisors
825 Fifth Street, Room 111

Dear Chairperson Lovelace and Members of the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors:

The Human Rights Commission is recommending to the Board of Supervisors that they publicly acknowledge and support the Independent Observer Program (IOP) and its positive contribution to the community. As in the past, we urge the Board of Supervisors to provide funds so that additional IOP recruits can be trained in this vital function.

The Human Rights Commission acknowledges and supports the nearly twenty years of volunteer community service provided by the members of The Independent Observers Program. Independent Observer Program volunteers are professionally trained, neutral observers who have been performing a vital service to the community since the timber wars of the late 1990's. Their presence in light blue jackets, hats, and identity badges at demonstrations, marches, and protests throughout Humboldt County has served to mitigate the potential for violence on numerous occasions. The latest action of the IOP was observed during the eviction of the homeless from the Palco Marsh.

The neutral observer program was initially a service performed by members of The Human Rights Commission but became an independent organization in early 2000 due to liability concerns expressed by The County Board of Supervisors and risk manager. Recognizing the value of the program, however, the Board, at that time, allocated funds to train the observers if they would form an independent organization. The offer was accepted, and a trainer from The University of Oregon was hired to provide training for approximately twelve IOP members.

Because of relatively low numbers and low profile now, little is known about the work of IOP and its benefits to the greater Humboldt community. The Human Rights Commission is concerned that this vital service may be discontinued if additional members are not recruited and trained. The Commission wishes to thank the Board of Supervisors for its previous support of the Independent Observer Program.

Sincerely, 

Jim Glover, Chair, For the Humboldt County Human Rights Commission

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BOARD OF SUPERVISOR

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Human Rights Commission

825 Fifth Street, Room 1A, Eureka, CA 95501 | 707.268.2548 | hhr@co.humboldt.ca.us

ANNUAL REPORT

July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016

TO: Humboldt County Board of Supervisors

FROM: Humboldt County Human Rights Commission

GENERAL MEETING INFORMATION

- Monthly meetings of the Human Rights Commission (HRC) are held at 5pm the first Thursday of each month in Conference Room A at the Humboldt County Courthouse.
- 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.
- Each monthly HRC meeting agenda is submitted to the Board of Supervisors, posted at the Courthouse and available on the HRC website. Regularly, the Times-Standard is requested to publish meeting announcements and a brief description of topics to be covered. With few exceptions, members of the public were in attendance at all regular monthly meetings.
- The HRC is challenged to conduct all its business and accommodate public participation within the two-hour meeting times available to us. We respectfully request more scheduling flexibility in order to complete our monthly agendas.
- During this fiscal year, the HRC held five special meetings which will be identified later in this report.

COMMISSION MEMBERS-As of June 30, 2016

DISTRICT 1: Byrd Lochtie, Carol Larsen, Jim Glover

DISTRICT 2: Larry Miller, Richard Leamon, (one vacancy)

DISTRICT 3: Keith Taylor, Larry Hourany, (one vacancy)

DISTRICT 4: Nezzie Wade, Dave Heise, (one vacancy)

DISTRICT 5: Jean Munsee, Liz Smith, (one vacancy)

Although the generosity and determination of Human Rights Commissioners continues to drive us forward, the continuing failure to fill vacancies on our Commission is very concerning.

OFFICERS OF THE COMMISSION

CHAIR: Nezzie Wade

Vice Chair: Keith Taylor

Secretary: Jim Glover

Treasurer: Byrd Lochtie

OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

Website: We have updated and maintained our website throughout the year. Meeting agendas, past meeting minutes, and our annual reports are available to view. You can also find links to, and contact information for a variety of county resources, agencies, and services. www.co.humboldt.ca.us/HumanRightsCom/

Synopsis of Projects and Participation in Local Events:

- August- Closed session with County Counsel, related to a suit stemming from alleged Brown Act violations.
- September- Participated in tabling at LGBTQ Humboldt Pride Festival.
- October- Participated in tabling at LatinoNet Health Fair.
- October- Sponsored a Southern Humboldt Outreach Listening Forum in Redway, where Supervisor Fennell was in attendance. This event was useful in reaching those seldom able to attend HRC regular meetings.

- October- Participated in tabling at the North Coast Veterans' Stand Down.
- January- Provided speaker to the Martin Luther King, Jr Day in Eureka.
- March- Participated in a Community Participation Fair sponsored by the League of Women Voters.
- Throughout the year, developed a comprehensive information packet to better inform new and current members of the HRC of their duties and obligations.

HRC Resource Cards:

The HRC Resource Cards, produced by the Commission in both English and Spanish, have historically been supported by a grant from the McLean Foundation with thousands of cards distributed annually. This program will now be supported by the County through cooperation with the County Administrative Office. We are grateful for this support as the cards are used by many individuals as well as private and public agencies and programs. Some of the agencies utilizing the Resource Cards include College of the Redwoods, Humboldt County Libraries, EDD, DHHS, and the District Attorney's office, to name a few. Without financial support, this very valuable tool would not be available.

PUBLIC CONTACT AND INPUT

The HRC maintains a telephone message line which is 707-268-2548 and is linked to an '800' number for out of County calls. This phone line is maintained by Commission members who volunteer to monitor incoming calls for periods of two weeks at a time, with rotating duties throughout the year. Significant call information is shared during Commission meetings. Typical calls include requests for Resource Cards, landlord-tenant disputes, unsafe housing conditions, various forms of discrimination in public places or private businesses, and complaints against police agencies.

During the past year 103 members of the public attended HRC Commission meetings, as guests. The HRC Message Line received 71 calls from members of the community expressing a wide range of concerns including unsafe housing conditions, discrimination in public places or private businesses, and numerous requests for HRC Resource Cards from organizations like College of the Redwoods, EDD, Public Libraries, and DHHS.

RESPONSES TO COMMUNITY CONCERNS

Among examples of responses to community concerns was the October 2015 meeting where the Humboldt Mobile Homeowners Coalition expressed their concern about the trend of mobile home park ownership turnover and resulting rent increases. A result of this presentation was a letter from HRC to the Board of Supervisors requesting the subject be placed on their agenda. We stated no position on the issue other than to request it be discussed.

At the June 2016 regular meeting the HRC received a presentation from the Independent Observer Program, requesting support from the HRC in writing a letter of support for its continuation. The group's most recent service included the observation of the removal of campers in the Palco Marsh evictions of May 2, 2016. The HRC will draft and approve such a letter in July or August, 2016.

Considerable time was made available to discuss the issue of homelessness throughout the County. One result of these discussions was the publication and distribution of an Open Letter to the Board of Supervisors, once again asking that they declare a Shelter Crisis within the County and to provide focused leadership on this issue.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

- **Homelessness:** We continue to urge the BOS to assert itself in a more focused manner in leading its departments and by extension, cooperating with the City of Eureka, and other communities, to deal with homelessness and all its complexities.
- **HRC Appointments:** We recommend that the BOS and the Commission work collaboratively to fill vacancies on the HRC. Such a high vacancy rate makes it difficult for the HRC to be effective in its mandated work. We feel confident the Board of Supervisors would agree this is not productive.

APPRECIATION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Human Rights Commission wishes to acknowledge and thanks several groups and individuals who have contributed greatly to our efforts in this past year.

- **The McLean Foundation** The Commission would especially like to express appreciation for the past grant awards that have allowed production of the Resource Cards so the Commission could provide them to the Humboldt County community.
- **The Board of Supervisors** for the appropriation of funds for Resource Cards in August 2016 and beyond.
- **County Administrative Officer** for lending the approval and staff support provided for printing the HRC Resource Cards and Brochures.
- **Previous Commission Members**, Donna Matthews, Barbara Caldwell, and Larry Hourany for their contribution to our efforts.

Respectfully Submitted,

Humboldt County Human Rights Commission, 2015-2016