



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

AGENDA ITEM NO.  
**C-3**

For the meeting of: February 9, 2016

Date: February 1, 2016  
To: Board of Supervisors  
From: Supervisor Estelle Fennell  
Subject: Appreciation Letter to Donna Matthews for her Services on the Human Rights Commission.

RECOMMENDATION(S): That the Board of Supervisors authorize the Chair to sign the letter of appreciation.

SOURCE OF FUNDING: N/A

DISCUSSION: The Board would like to thank Donna Matthews for serving on the Human Rights Commission. Ms. Matthews has decided to step down from the Human Rights Commission.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: N/A

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT: N/A

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS: Board discretion.

ATTACHMENTS: Resignation Letter of and Letter of Appreciation.

Prepared by Kathy Hayes

Signature *Estelle Fennell*

REVIEW:

Auditor \_\_\_\_\_ County Counsel \_\_\_\_\_ Personnel \_\_\_\_\_ Risk Manager \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

TYPE OF ITEM:

- Consent
- Departmental
- Public Hearing
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

Upon motion of Supervisor *Bass* Seconded by Supervisor *Fennell*  
 Ayes *Sandberg, Fennell, Lovelace, Behn, Bass*  
 Nays \_\_\_\_\_  
 Abstain \_\_\_\_\_  
 Absent \_\_\_\_\_

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Board Order No. \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting of: \_\_\_\_\_

and carried by those members present, the Board hereby approves the recommended action contained in this Board report.

Dated: *February 9, 2016*  
 By: *Kathy Hayes*  
 Kathy Hayes, Clerk of the Board

January 31, 2016

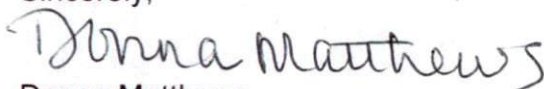
Dear Chairperson Lovelace and Members of the Board of Supervisors:

I am writing regarding my tenure as a member of the Human Rights Commission of Humboldt County for the past year. I was appointed to the Commission per Supervisor Fennell's recommendation and your collective agreement and my role as I understood it then and now is to *"Report annually to the Board of Supervisors (BOS) on activities of the Commission during the previous year, offer recommendations to the BOS, and offer an assessment of the state of human rights in Humboldt County. 2. Co-sponsor public events to gather information and opinions from the community. 3. Investigate complaints of human rights violation and recommend possible remedies. 4. Educate citizens of Humboldt County about our human rights."* I embrace/d these charges wholeheartedly, served actively on two ad hoc committees (Activity Planning/Budget and LGBTQ Outreach) and spearheaded initiating education for the Commission on the Brown Act. I maintained my passion and commitment until I ultimately came to a realization that there was/is no demonstrated support for the work of the Commission by the Board of Supervisors, including a commitment to funding to support activities of the Commission.

When I was appointed one year ago, I learned the Human Rights Commission (HRC) had written a request one year prior requesting a County Shelter Crisis be declared by the Board of Supervisors. That one year grew to two years with no formal response from the Board of Supervisors (BOS) as an entity. This is incomprehensible given that the Commission by definition makes recommendations regarding human rights issues of the citizens to the BOS. I secondly learned that – while the Commission exists to educate and outreach to communities, advise the Board of Supervisors about human rights issues and investigate complaints – there is no funding to support the logistical expenses (e.g. for outreach tabling at community events). Just two weeks ago in my last meeting with Supervisor Fennell, I attempted to educate the Supervisor by example about how this impacts me personally: that I had spent over \$150 out of pocket on just two outreach activities last year. I expressed concern that a lack of minimal resources has stymied the Commission, leading to Commission discussion about how to raise money instead of how to fulfill its duties. I further explained this results in a Commission not inclusive of people of lesser incomes. The response was that human rights are "historically funded by those who can afford to" [sponsor them]. I cannot ethically participate on a Commission that is expected to fund itself and embodies benevolence (or elitism at worst) rather than empowerment of citizens of disparate incomes. I am aghast at the suggestion.

I therefore submit my resignation which is effective at the close of the next meeting of the Human Rights Commission on February 4, 2016 at 7pm. I will gladly rejoin the Commission – if invited to - once a budget is in place to support activities of the Commission and once there is an established and mutual relationship between the BOS and the Commission as evidenced by formal responses by the BOS to formal recommendations of the Commission and a dialogue about shared goals of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Donna Matthews

[Donnamatthews39@gmail.com](mailto:Donnamatthews39@gmail.com)



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

# COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

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EUREKA, CALIFORNIA 95501-1153 PHONE (707) 476-2390 FAX (707) 445-7299

February 9, 2016

Donna Matthews

[REDACTED]  
Fortuna, CA 95540

Dear Ms. Matthews:

On behalf of the Board, we would like to thank you for the time you have served on the Human Rights Commission and for the excellent job you have done in serving the citizens of your community. Your dedication is greatly appreciated.

We wish you success in your future endeavors.

Sincerely,

Mark Lovelace, Chair  
Humboldt County Board of Supervisors

ML:kh