

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, 2018 through June 30, 2019

- **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.
- 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.
- 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 request 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.
- 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. Participation by remote technology has been **proposed and will be mentioned later in this report.**
- During this fiscal year, the HRC conducted twelve regular meetings held at the Courthouse. In addition, representatives have participated in Southern Humboldt meetings almost every month this fiscal year. The purpose of these outreach efforts has been to support ongoing efforts to address homelessness in the area with the third highest point in time count numbers for homeless people in our county. We believe the ranking is less important than **the feeling of Southern Humboldt residents feeling being left to their own devices to address their housing needs.** An attempt to include a quarterly BOS report of HRC issues was agreed to by the chair of the Board of Supervisors, but scheduling difficulties prevented this from getting started.
- The Commission thinks it would be useful and wise to do a semi-annual report one in September which is traditional and one in March which we favor as well. Although

supported by the Supervisors last year, we have not initiated this practice. It is our hope that this coming spring we will launch the more frequent reporting to the Supervisors.

**COMMISSION OFFICERS
(Elected June 6, 2019)**

CHAIR: James 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: Philip Anzada, Steven Loreus, **ONE VACANCY**

DISTRICT 4: Jonnie Rush, Mary Lyons, **ONE VACANCY**

DISTRICT 5: Lelehnia Dubois, Erin Rowe, Toby Vanlandingham

We experienced departures for the following reasons: resignation due to relocation out of area (1). 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, hate speech, bullying, violent rhetoric and threats of physical attack, race relations, cultural awareness, inmate rights, and outreach to the general public.

OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

Website: We have continued to provide updated information to our website throughout the year. The public may access our webpage at 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.

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 its first-ever 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.
- **August-**Continued a multi-year inquiry into Human Trafficking. Advertised for applications for the Human Trafficking Fund administered by the Humboldt Area Foundation. EPD Chief Watson spoke to the Commission and answered questions. Human Trafficking Stakeholders meeting hosted at the Humboldt Area Foundation drew law enforcement, social services, native representatives.
- **September-** Presented 2017-2018 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 issues 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. Established Standing Committee devoted to monitoring Sanctuary Ordinance activity.
- **February-** Approved and ordered printed materials for businesses to state their policies on welcoming of respectful and lawful use of their facilities. These cards are now posted in dozens of local businesses and agencies. Had representatives attend all County budget hearings to consider a more robust response to Human Trafficking throughout our community. Funding this effort was from the McLean Foundation. DHHS agrees to assume responsibility for Resource Cards, but will consult with Human Rights Commission.
- **March-** APD Chief Brian Ahearn made a presentation to the Commission and answered questions from the Commissioners. HRC begins regular collaboration with Human Trafficking Collaborative.
- **April-** Participated in LatinoNet held in Fortuna. First responses from ACLU of Northern California were received. They appear willing to receive documentation relative to the criminalization of homeless people. Several Commissioners attended a training session on racism and how we can better respond to it.
- **May-**An outline for action in 2020 was adopted and will be centered on the need for respectful discourse in public media, meetings, and elsewhere. The effort will begin in December and run throughout 2020. **Anti-Hate 2020.**
- **June-**Elections were held with Jim Glover, reelected Chair, Erin Rowe elected Vice Chair, Philip Anzada reelected secretary, and Mary Lyons, elected Treasurer.
- **HRC Resource Cards:**

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. The help requests range from concerns about unsafe housing concerns, unfair labor practices, law enforcement complaints, racial or ethnic discrimination, homeless-related 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.

RESPONSES TO COMMUNITY CONCERNS

A result of last year's February Community Conversation in Garberville, was a series of one-on-one interviews and group meetings aimed at addressing the overriding issue of the area which is homelessness and the community tensions that seem to follow. These interactions were with community members, business owners, activists, law enforcement officials, and members of the homeless camps.

Of concern to the County generally was the subject of Civil Rights and Diversity protections. We provided a blueprint statement to the BOS which was endorsed by the Sheriff's Office. With the subsequent adoption by the Board of Supervisors, the Human Rights Commission was able to provide a Spanish translation of this declaration which is in distribution throughout the County. Funding was provided by the McLean Foundation.

One issue that has occupied the Commission for nearly three years is Human Trafficking. With much determination, the HRC has achieved at least one goal, that of funding data collection related to this scourge within our community. Beginning immediately, the Commission will begin collaborating with the Humboldt Area Foundation to administer funds to groups that can competently provide relevant information.

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 currently inquiring of the Information Technology department of the possibilities of equipping conference room 1A 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). This could be a possible solution to the long-existing vacancies in our more remote areas. Any such accommodation

would not only benefit the Human Rights Commission, but also any other commission or committee or even OES groups in their work.

We always try to be respectful in our relationship with the Board of Supervisors. In doing so, we will continue to consult, advise, and debate if necessary 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 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.
- **Members of the Southern Humboldt community** for their caring concern for their fellow citizens and specifically a new 501c3 known as SHO.
- **Access Humboldt** for their willingness to work with the Commission in a variety of ways to promote positive action within our community.
- **Sheriff Honsal** for his candid conversations on the subjects of civil rights and diversity, homelessness, and human trafficking.
- **Previous Commission Members, Dave Heise and Lance Morton** for their service.

Respectfully Submitted,

Humboldt County Human Rights Commission, 2018-2019