

Human Rights Commission

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ANNUAL REPORT TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018

TO: Humboldt County Board of Supervisors

FROM: Humboldt County Human Rights Commission

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, the Times-Standard and additional media is requested 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.
- Although we continue to be constrained by meeting deadlines that are dictated by the schedule of another commission, we always attempt to conduct our business within a two hour period and to accommodate public participation.
- During this fiscal year, the HRC conducted twelve regular meetings held at the Courthouse. In addition, representatives were deployed to Southern Humboldt fourteen times (and counting) in order to facilitate local actions otherwise not addressed in the courthouse.

- 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 at least be allowed to do a semi-annual report one in September which is traditional and one in March which we favor as well.

COMMISSION OFFICERS

CHAIR: James Glover

VICE CHAIR: Lance Morton

SECRETARY: Philip Anzada and Lelehnia Dubois (co-secretaries)

TREASURER: Byrd Lochtie

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, Brandie Wilson, **ONE VACANCY**

DISTRICT 4: Dave Heise, Jonnie Rush, Lance Morton

DISTRICT 5: Lelehnia Dubois, Christine Willfong, Erin Rowe

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 were (are) human trafficking, civil rights / diversity, homelessness, landlord-tenant disputes, race relations, veterans' welfare, and more.

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: This Spring, we resumed outreach with a Facebook social media site that already has a number of followers. After consultation with the County Administrator's Office and County Technology Services, we were able to begin reaching the public by way of this page in late May.

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-**Issued a letter supporting efforts to improve conditions for jail inmates with volunteer intern to do data research. Began electronic archiving of Human Rights related news articles available to all commissioners.
- **August-**Continued a multi-year inquiry into Human Trafficking.
- **September-** Presented 2016-2017 Annual Report to Board of Supervisors. Dr. Cheryl Johnson updated the Commission on systemic race issues with a local slant.
Approval by BOS of HRC inspired Civil Rights / Diversity Resolution.
- **December-**Had representatives at every City Council (except Ferndale) meeting and the Board of Supervisors observing Human Rights Awareness Month.
Began exploring Officer Involved Shooting Policy as presented by the Sheriff and the District Attorney.
Agreed to table at the NAACP Martin Luther King Observance in January
- **January-**Two commissioners participated in a televised round table discussion of video transparency by law enforcement.
Provided a MY Word column to the Times-Standard on Officer Involved Shootings.
- **February-** Hosted Sally Hewitt, Senior Program Manager who addressed homeless outreach efforts with an emphasis on rural areas.
Began a second effort to establish a Social Media (Facebook) outreach program.
Organized a visit to the Rescue Mission to better understand issues. This was based on reports that some clients were being denied access.
Planned and executed effort to attend all County budget hearings to consider a more robust response to Human Trafficking throughout our community.
- **April-** Guest presenter was Alexia Siebuhr discussing Human Trafficking.
Distribution began on our Right To Refuse Service signage. The funding for more of these signs is included in a proposal for a new grant from the McLean Foundation.
- **May-**After 14 visits to Southern Humboldt, facilitating a community effort to address rural homelessness, the ad hoc committee ended its role. Some individuals plan to continue attending meetings in order to offer insights as needed. After considerable effort, the Commission officially established its Social Media (Facebook) page under the auspices of the County.
- **June-**The Human Rights Commission amended its Bylaws to allow for officers to serve up to four single year consecutive terms in any one office. The subsequent

election of officers was conducted with Chair Glover, Vice Chair Morton, Co-Secretaries Anzada and Dubois, and Treasurer Lochtie all reelected.

HRC Resource Cards:

The very popular HRC Resource Cards, produced by the Commission in English and Spanish are now supported by funding from DHHS. Many thousands of these wallet-sized cards are distributed annually. These cards are used by many individuals as well as private and public agencies and programs. Some of the agencies utilizing these cards are College of the Redwoods, Humboldt County Libraries, EDD, DHHS and the District Attorney's office. Distribution is widespread through various school districts, some utilizing both English and Spanish versions. There is some discussion ongoing with DHHS to combine their efforts with our broader outreach. Without the support of the CAO and DHHS, this valuable community tool would not be possible. These cards are reviewed and updated approximately every other year with the newest update scheduled to occur in the Spring of 2019.

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 five 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. If long-term vacancies exist, the Commission will reach out to the affected district supervisors and to work to find a solution. We are ready to assist, but the final action is from you representing your districts.

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 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.
- **District Attorney, Maggie Fleming** for proactively including the Commission in presenting plans for bodycam policies in agencies throughout the County.
- **The County Administrative Office** for continuing staff support for the printing of the HRC Resource Cards and Brochures.
- **Members of the Southern Humboldt community** for their caring concern for their fellow citizens.

- **Alexia Siebuhr** for making an enlightening presentation informing the Commission of the ongoing issue of Human Trafficking.
- **Access Humboldt** in providing a forum for discussing Law Enforcement Transparency related to available technology and for providing PSA announcements for broadening outreach to the general public.
- **Sheriff Honsal** for his candid conversations on the subjects of civil rights and diversity, homelessness, and human trafficking.
- **Previous Commission Member**, Kamila Barajas for her service.

Respectfully Submitted,

Humboldt County Human Rights Commission, 2017-2018