

City of Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission

Annual Report to City Council

July 1, 2010 - June 30, 2011



Building Bridges of Understanding

Prepared by the
Department of Human Resources



Dear Mayor Sessoms & City Council Members:

I am proud to present the Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission's (HRC) Annual Report. This report provides highlights of the various accomplishments, initiatives and programs involving the Human Rights Commission's dedicated volunteers, staff members, department liaisons and other City agencies.

The HRC continues to educate citizens, address human rights related issues, and ensure more efforts are made to focus on citizens' concerns in order to protect their rights.

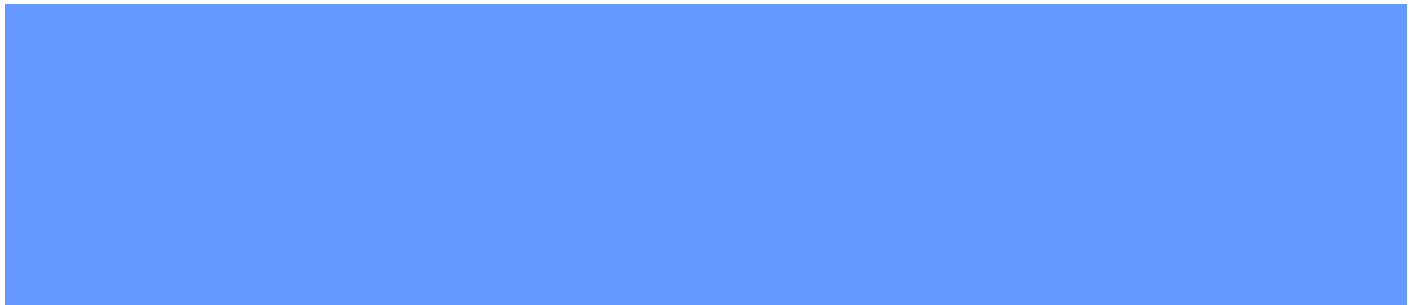
Last year was a year of hope and promise, and we continue to witness great changes and vast challenges in our nation. But, even in the midst of these challenging times, we all need to continue to uphold our obligations to ensure citizens are treated fairly. We must listen to one another, nurture our relationships and bring people together for the greater good by building bridges of understanding. As we prepare to enter another fiscal year, the HRC will continue to champion change, observe progress, celebrate successes, and actively address challenges.

As always, I appreciate your continued support. It is a privilege and honor to lead this commission.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fay B. Silverman".

Fay B. Silverman, Chair
Human Rights Commission





In Memoriam



Helen P. Shropshire
August 31, 1933 - May 12, 2011
“Helping People Through Service”

Mrs. Helen Shropshire was at the grassroots of forming our Human Rights Commission. She served as a chairperson and commissioner for many years. Helen was extremely active in the community and made a tremendous impact and vast changes.

She was a person who listened very attentively and always spoke very carefully to ensure that she never offended others. She was a thoughtful leader and a true professional. Helen was very passionate about human rights and education. She was always, always kind and demonstrated a positive attitude even when discussing sensitive topics. As a retired professional educator from Norfolk City Schools, Helen believed language was one of the most powerful tools in the world. She was an amazing person with a lot of care, energy and sensitively toward others.

She will be missed by all who knew her, and we will be forever grateful for her passion, dedication and for educating the community about cultural harmony.



Live a Life that Matters

Ready or not, some day it will all come to an end.
There will be no more sunrises, no minutes, hours or days.
All the things you collected, whether treasured or forgotten,
will pass to someone else.

Your wealth, fame and temporal power will shrivel to irrelevance.
It will not matter what you owned or what you were owed.
Your grudges, resentments, frustrations, and jealousies
will finally disappear.

So, too, your hopes, ambitions, plans, and to-do lists will expire.
The wins and losses that once seemed so important will fade away.

It won't matter where you came from, or on what side of the
tracks you lived, at the end.

It won't matter whether you were beautiful or brilliant.
Even your gender and skin color will be irrelevant.
So what will matter?

How will the value of your days be measured?

What will matter is not what you bought, but what you built;
not what you got, but what you gave.

What will matter is not your success, but your significance.
What will matter is not what you learned, but what you taught.

What will matter is every act of integrity, compassion,
courage or sacrifice that enriched, empowered or encouraged
others to emulate your example.

What will matter is not your competence, but your character.

What will matter is not how many people you knew,
but how many will feel a lasting loss when you're gone.

What will matter is not your memories,
but the memories that live in those who loved you.

What will matter is how long you will be remembered,
by whom and for what.

Living a life that matters doesn't happen by accident.

It's not a matter of circumstance but of choice ...

Author Unknown



Human Rights Commission Members

Fay B. Silverman, Chair
Father James E. Parke, Vice-Chair
William "Cliff" Rice, 2nd Vice-Chair
Beatriz Amberman
Vivian E. Blaize
Ronald Carter
Rev. E. Ray Cox, Sr.
Greg Goldfarb
William A. Hearst
Gene J. Hou
Geraldine King Hunt
Mohammad Karim, Ph.D.
L. W "Duff" Kliewer, Jr.
Dr. Agnes Moon
Antwan L. Perry
Council Liaisons
Rita Sweet Bellitto
Glenn R. Davis

Staff Members

Regina Hilliard, Director of Human Resources
Bonnie Hall, HRC Coordinator
Millicent Gallagher, HRC Recorder

Liaison Members

Rod Ingram, Deputy City Attorney
Deputy Chief John L. Bell Jr., Police Department
Crystal M. Ferrara, Human Services Department
Sergeant Rick Norris, Sheriff's Office



Executive Summary

We continue to see tremendous growth in our population since the Human Rights Commission was formed in 1991 and governed under City ordinance 91-2088. Citizens of diverse races, religions, ethnic backgrounds, and cultures reside in our City. It is very important that we continue to share this diversity with all citizens so they gain a greater understanding of our differences. It is our hope that citizens will learn, accept and include those different from themselves so that we will all live a more enriching life.

The objectives of the Commission are to:

- ◆ Conduct and engage in educational and informational programs for the promotion of mutual understanding and respect among citizens and the fulfillment of human rights.
- ◆ Serve as a forum for discussion about human rights issues, and to conduct studies and propose solutions for the improvement of human relations in the City.
- ◆ Provide assistance to persons who believe their rights have been violated by identifying the appropriate federal, state or local agency to address the complaint and referring such persons to that agency.

This report provides a brief summary of the past year's special activities, signature events and accomplishments of the Commission. We have made amazing strides toward educating and bringing residents, schools and community leaders together to obtain a better understanding of diversity and cultural differences.



Educational Efforts





Diversity Symposium

In celebration of Diversity Awareness Month and Disability Employment Awareness Month, the Department Human Resources coordinated the 2010 Diversity & Inclusion Symposium. The HRC co-sponsored this event, which was attended by 94 community partners and City members.

This symposium was extremely successful and provided us with a great opportunity to reconnect with the community as partners in our mutual commitment to human rights, equal employment opportunity, diversity, and inclusion.

Human Rights Week

On Thursday, December 9, the Human Rights Commission kicked off "Human Rights Week" with a special ceremony at the Town Center Fountain Plaza. Mayor Sessoms presented a human rights resolution, followed by a message from Police Deputy Chief Ray Eisenberg, and a musical performance by the Brandon Middle School Select Ensemble directed by Michele Powell.

City Council liaisons to the HRC Glenn Davis and Rita Sweet Bellitto attended along with former mayor Meyera E. Oberndorf, HRC Commissioners, Director of Human Resources, Regina Hilliard, Fire Chief Steve Cover, Sheriff Chief Deputy Dennis Free, and many City members and residents.

The commission encouraged all citizens to acquaint themselves with human rights issues, to support human rights advocates, to recognize the good works performed by human rights heroes, and to continue to build bridges of understanding by participating in this observance.



Human Rights Resolution

A Resolution to Recognize Human Rights in Virginia Beach

City Council liaisons Rita Sweet Bellitto and Glenn Davis collaborated with a sub-committee which consisted of HRC members, staff and City community leaders to develop a resolution to recognize human rights in Virginia Beach. We were honored and pleased to present this resolution to the citizens and community leaders of Virginia Beach on December 9, 2010.

WHEREAS: *the City of Virginia Beach recognizes its rich history and our indigenous heritage populations,*

WHEREAS: *the first immigrants to our nation landed on the shores of Virginia Beach in 1607, and our City is proud of its historic heritage;*

WHEREAS: *the City of Virginia Beach appreciates that our nation was founded by immigrants, some who came here voluntarily and some who were brought here against their will;*

WHEREAS: *immigrants have made important contributions to our nation's culture and our City's diversity, and constitute an important part of our community;*

WHEREAS: *the City of Virginia Beach has historically supported policies that prohibit discrimination based on race, color, ethnicity, sex, age, marital status, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, and disability;*

WHEREAS: *the military is our City's largest employer, and the diversity of the military has contributed richly to the diversity of our community;*

WHEREAS: *tourism is an important part of Virginia Beach's economy, and is made possible by the City's acceptance of all cultures and diverse backgrounds.*

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, *that the Virginia Beach City Council hereby recognizes that in light of these and future contributions, the City of Virginia Beach strives to continue to provide an environment that is welcoming and protects the human rights of all in our community.*



Seventeenth Annual Human Rights Awards Program

The Commission hosted our Seventeenth Annual Human Rights Awards Program and annual banquet on April 27 at the Virginia Beach Convention Center. The purpose of this program is to recognize citizens for their meritorious service in the pursuit of cultural diversity and human rights for all.

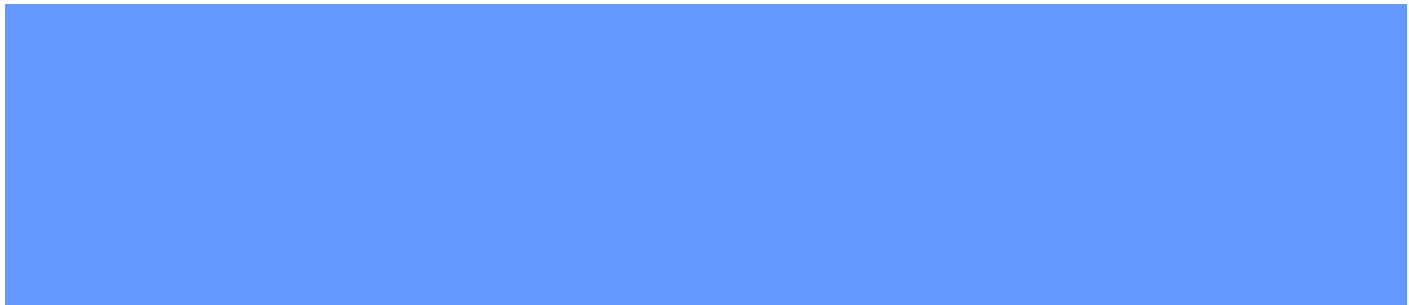
This year's Human Rights Award recipients:

- Bridget Browne
- Lt. Brent Burnette
- Roxie Camp
- Dr. Michael Daniels
- Virginia Beach CIT Interfaith Committee

In addition, the Commission honored the memory of the late Daniel Matthew Stone, former Department of Social Services Director, by awarding the Daniel M. Stone Humanitarian Award. This is the seventh year that the Commission awarded this prestigious honor and selected *Beverly Hill and Fred Burdette* as this year's recipients. They also presented the second Meyera E. Oberndorf Human Rights for Achievement in Government Award to *Andrew Friedman, Director of Housing and Neighborhood Preservation*.

Commissioner Antwan Perry served as the master of ceremonies. In attendance were 160 guests along with members of the HRC, Mayor Will Sessoms, Council member Rita Sweet Bellitto, City Manager Jim Spore, Deputy City Managers Steve Herbert and Acting Deputy City Manager Cindy Curtis, Police Chief James Cervera, and Director of Human Resources Regina Hilliard.

“If we cannot now end our differences, at least we
can help make the world safe for diversity.” ~ John Fitzgerald Kennedy





Seventeenth Annual Human Rights Award Recipients



Mayor Sessoms
Bridget Browne
Fay Silverman



Mayor Sessoms
Brent Burnette
Fay Silverman



Mayor Sessoms
Dr. Michael Daniels
Fay Silverman



Mayor Sessoms
CIT Interfaith Committee
Fay Silverman



Mayor Sessoms
Roxie Camp
Fay Silverman



Fay Silverman
Sylvia Hill & Family
Mayor Sessoms

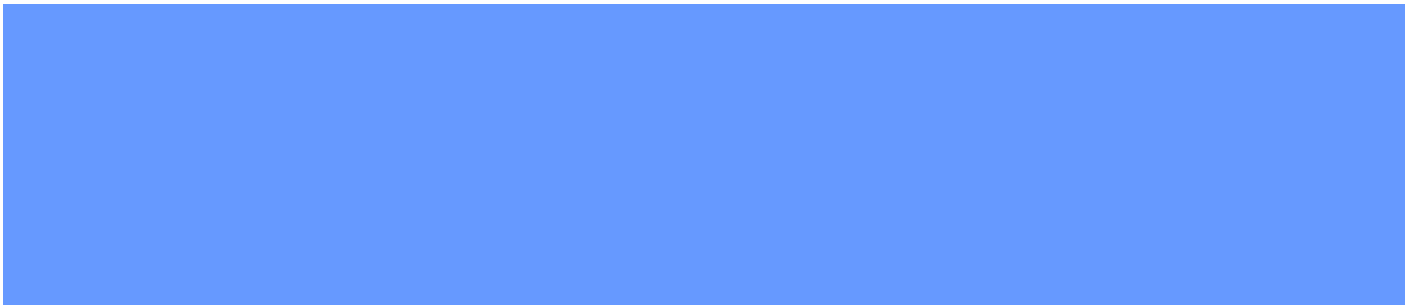


Mayor Sessoms
Andy Friedman
Meyera Oberndorf
Fay Silverman





Communication





Ancillary Duties

Designated Commissioners visited the City's Correctional and Juvenile facilities on a regular basis to do a "walk through review" of the services and atmosphere. Each Commissioner observed and provided a written statement to the Commission after their visit addressing the following:

- Interaction of correctional officers with the adult and juvenile inmates
- Living conditions (i.e. adequacy of space of inmates)
- Rehabilitation activities/programs
- Discrimination of any type to the adult and juvenile inmates

The Commission also visited the Oceanfront during Fourth of July, Labor Day, Memorial Day and other non-holiday days to monitor services offered by the City and to observe and assess the atmosphere in regards to a safe and friendly environment. Again, the designated Commissioners reported positive observations.

HRC Volunteer Hours

As you are aware, Commission members are appointed as volunteers by City Council to serve on the Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission. This budget year we have volunteered approximately 475 hours with an estimated savings of \$26,000 to achieve our mission to the citizens of Virginia Beach.





Human Rights Inquiries



One of the objectives of the Commission is to provide assistance to residents who believe their rights have been violated. The Commission does not have legal authority to act on the claims. Rather, the role of the Commission is to assist the person with identifying the appropriate agency (at the local, state or national levels) that can address the claim.

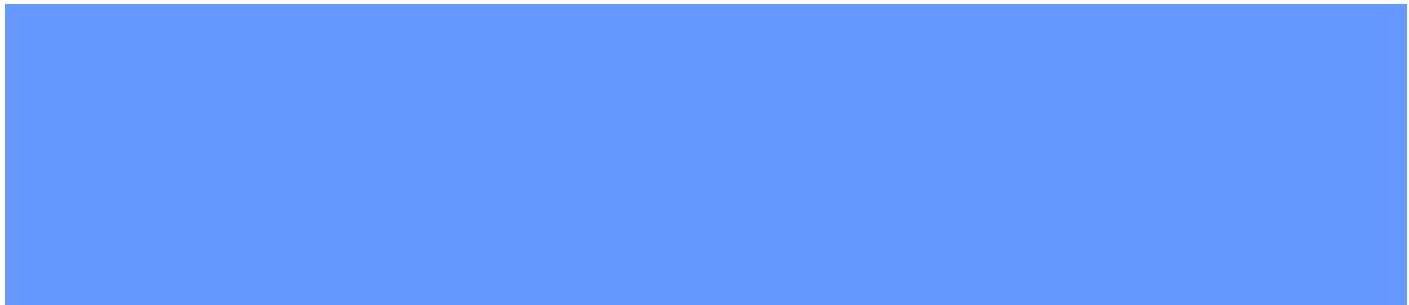
Listed below are the inquiries received from our citizen’s in the last year:

Type of Inquiry	Number of Inquiries	Agency Referral
Employment	16	EEOC, Legal Aid Society & VA Council for Human Rights
Other	3	Variety of agencies

Note: Other indicates that the inquiry may have fallen under several categories of the protected rights or that the individual did not specify the type of inquiry.

Mission

The Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission (HRC) exists to advocate for the human rights of residents in the City of Virginia Beach





Legislative Agenda Submittal

The HRC drafted statements for inclusion in the Legislative Agenda for the 2011 General Assembly Session. The statements included language preventing discrimination based on sexual orientation and the Virginia State Police policy that required volunteer chaplains to deliver non-denominational prayers at department-sanctioned events be reinstated. We were pleased with the progress; passage through the Senate, but stalled in the House.

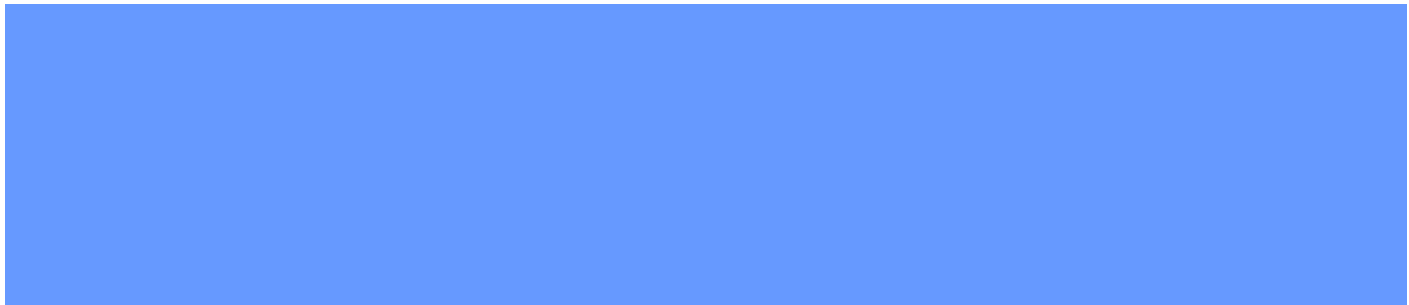
Monthly Public Meetings

The HRC conducts monthly meetings to discuss human rights issues facing the community. These meetings are held on the second Thursday of every month at 4 pm. However, the by-laws state that members shall meet at least four times each year and may schedule regular meetings as often as necessary to transact the business of the Commission. In an effort to reach out to the community, this year we started having our monthly meetings at various City facilities.

Again this year, some judges from our judicial system ordered citizens charged with race relation issues, to attend our monthly meetings. The judges determined the number of meetings the citizens were required to attend, and staff verified their attendance at the required meeting.

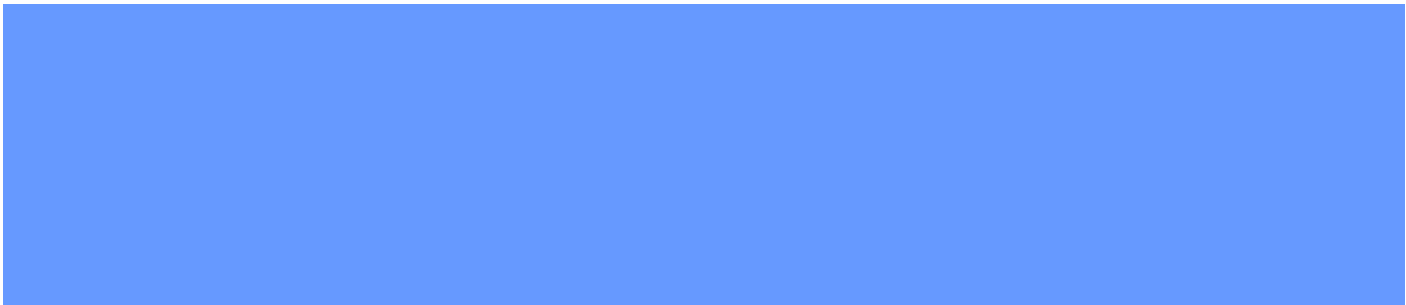
Sponsorship Campaign

We have worked with the City Attorney's Office to develop sponsorship guidelines to assist the HRC in our sponsorship campaign efforts. We have a sub-committee formed to determine the process and keep City Council informed once we launch this new initiative.





Community Outreach





Building Bridges of Understanding Series
“What Does Human Rights Mean to Me?”

A subcommittee of the Human Rights Commission (HRC) was formed at the request of former HRC chairperson Rev. William A. Dyson, with continued support of current HRC chairperson Fay B. Silverman, to gain a common understanding of what the term human rights meant to selected groups. This served as a springboard to sharing insights and information about current human rights concerns and issues in the diverse community of Virginia Beach. The subcommittee consisted of members of the Human Rights Commission and the HRC Coordinator.

Through the efforts of all stakeholders, the subcommittee believed the following *desired outcomes* could be achieved:

- Greater understanding of community concerns
- New ideas and recommendations for outreach efforts
- A means to market the Human Rights Commission
- Demonstration that human rights, diversity and inclusion are important to the City of Virginia Beach

The subcommittee developed the structure and ‘core’ questions and presented their proposal to the Human Rights Commission. After the ‘core’ questions and format were adopted, the subcommittee started developing a list of stakeholders. The HRC decided to sponsor three “Building Bridges of Understanding” meetings. Citizens were invited from three community groups: community leaders, city government and education, and religious and youth groups. The same format and questions were utilized at each meeting. City Council liaisons to the HRC, Glenn Davis and Rita Sweet Bellitto, participated during these meetings.

A report of these findings and recommendations were presented to Mayor Sessoms and City Council, and we look forward to working with Council to move the recommendations forward.



Virginia Beach Project Homeless Connect - A Day of Services

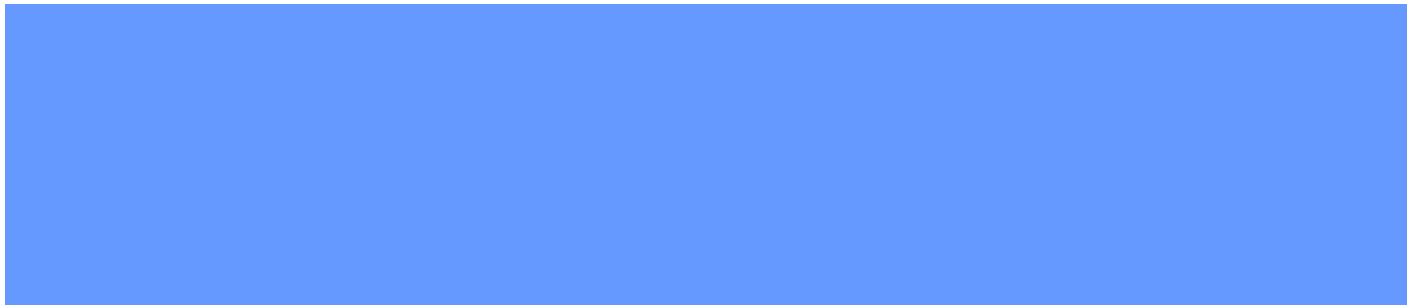
On January 27 the City of Virginia Beach conducted the annual Point-In-Time Count of homeless individuals and families. The HRC received a preliminary report from the Housing Department that reflected an increase in the homelessness count. In addition, the HRC provided personal care items and the HRC Coordinator volunteered to assist at the Day of Services at the Virginia Beach United Methodist Church. This program, sponsored by the City's Housing Department and the Virginia Beach Homeless Advocacy and Resource Partnership (VBHARP), assisted more than 350 people in need of services.

ABC's Extreme Makeover: Home Edition

In February 2011 members of the Commission and HRC Coordinator participated in many of the activities for the Hill-Burdette family including the march and food bank drive.

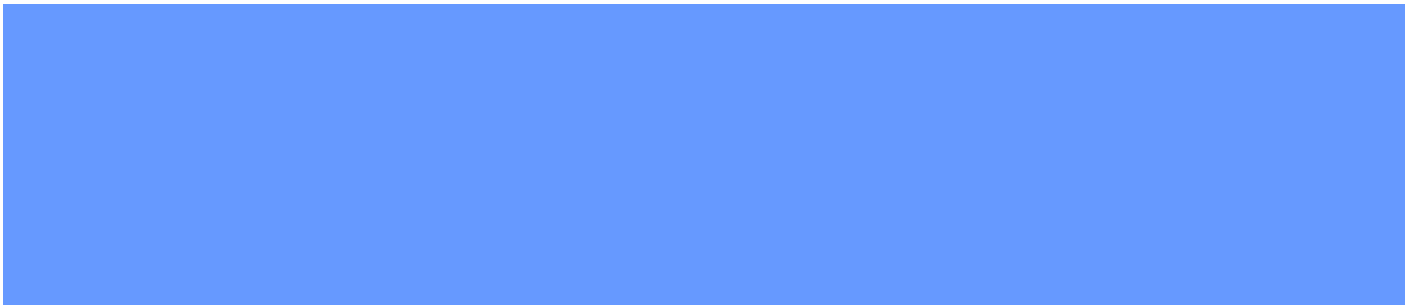
Targeted Neighborhood Program

The HRC continues to monitor and work with the Police Department and other City agencies/departments to support the Atlantis and Northridge communities; as well as to determine other communities that may need assistance from a human rights/human relations perspective. The Commission periodically meets with City staff to ensure residents of these communities are satisfied with the services they are receiving.





Other Activities





VBPD Promotional Ceremony

Commissioners and the HRC Coordinator attended Chief Cervera's swearing in ceremony and attended the Police Department's Promotion Ceremony to celebrate the promotion of our HRC Police liaisons Deputy Chief John L. Bell and Deputy Chief Tony Zucaro.

VBPD Retirement of Police Chief A.M. "Jake" Jacocks, Jr.

Chairperson Silverman presented a video presentation on behalf of the HRC to Chief Jacocks thanking him for his years of service and his partnership opportunities with the HRC.

Special Community Events

Chairperson Silverman attended the Virginia Conflict Resolution Center Peacemaker Awards Celebration on October 20, 2010.

Chairperson Silverman attended the Minority Business Council's Business Expo.

Chairperson Silverman attended the Inclusive Communities 47th Annual Banquet.





City Committees

Commission members serve on various committees:

- Affordable Housing
- Community Health Needs Assessment
- Light Rail Committee
- Mayor's Roundtable
- Virginia Beach Arts & Humanities Commission
- Virginia Beach Council of Civic Organizations

Increase HRC Membership

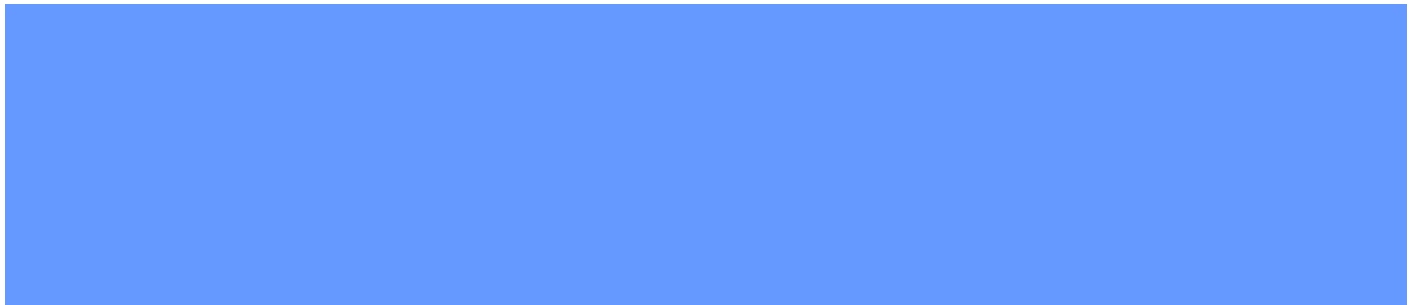
City Council adopted the ordinance to amend Section 2-459 of City Code on April 27, 2010 which allowed our membership to increase from 11 members to 15. This increase has enabled Council to increase our membership's diversity so it better reflects the diversity of our community.

Commissioners Appointed in 2010-2011

During this fiscal year, City Council appointed Geraldine King Hunt, Mohammad Karim, Dr. Agnes Moon, and L. W. "Duff" Kliewer, Jr. to serve as Commissioners.

New Commissioner Training

In August 2010 staff provided training to newly appointed commissioners to provide the HRC mission, by-laws, meeting format, signature events, legal and media obligations, and our goals.





Presentations

To keep informed, we periodically request presentations from staff and other sources on various topics. The following were provided during the past year:

- **September 2010 - Meyera E. Oberndorf Central Library**
Meet and greet with Police Chief Jim Cervera and staff to discuss the role of the HRC and the ancillary duties performed at the Oceanfront
- **October 2010 - Municipal Center/Building19**
Overview of the Voter Registrar Services to gain an understanding of the service levels for citizens who need accommodations - General Registrar Pat Harrington
- **November 2010 - New Hope Baptist Church**
VBPD Survey for At-Risk Neighborhoods - Deputy Chief John L. Bell
- **March 2011 - Law Enforcement Training Academy (LETA)**
VBPD Recruitment Team presented their recruitment strategies and testing requirements and a tour of LETA - Captain Santos
- **April 2011 - Kempsville Recreation Center**
VBPD Recruitment Team presented SAO Results and Potential Test Content and a sample study guide from Rhode Island State Police
- **May 2011 - Bayside Recreation Center**
The City's 2011 EEO, Diversity and Inclusion Plan - Susan Steed, HR and EEO departmental representatives

Overview of the VBCPS Equity Council - Dr. Esther Monclova Johnson
- **June 2011- Municipal Center/Building19**
Oceanfront Activity Report - Deputy Chief Zucaro, Captain Lynn Stafford, Captain Pat Gallagher and Lt. Brent Burnette



***What we have to do
is to find a way to celebrate our diversity
and debate our differences without
fracturing our communities.***



**Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission
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385-8374 ~ www.VBgov.com/hrc**