



City of Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission FACT SHEET Revised 7/11

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

MEMBERSHIP: Fifteen (15) persons representative of the diversity of residents in our City, are appointed by City Council to serve on the Human Rights Commission. Commissioner(s) serve as a volunteer and do not receive stipends for attendance of meetings or events.

AUTHORIZATION: The HRC will provide assistance to anyone who believes that his or her rights were violated. The Commission **does not have legal authority** to act on the claims. The role of the Commission is to assist the individual by identifying the appropriate agency (at the local, state and/or national levels) that can address their claim.

FUNDING: The HRC is physically located in the Department of Human Resources, but the HRC has their own fund code for funding their programs.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION: Coordination of HRC programs which work toward mutual understanding and respect of all citizens and fulfillment of human rights. Includes conducting recognition and education programs, discussion forums, human relations studies, and referral assistance to citizens who feel their rights have been violated.

Educational Programs

- Host of *Children's Diversity Art Contest*. Contest is open to all school age children attending public, private or home school in Virginia Beach. Contest participants must visually illustrate their thoughts about diversity and culture according to the selected theme.
- Host of *Children's Diversity Essay Contest*. Contest provided an opportunity for all middle and high school age students to express their own thoughts and ideas about diversity and culture through written essays.
- *HRC's Annual Human Rights Awards Program*. This recognition program gives the community the opportunity to nominate an individual, community group, organizations, and businesses for meritorious service in the pursuit of cultural diversity and advocacy of human rights for all. In addition, the Commission presents the Daniel Matthew Stone Humanitarian Award to a resident who has exceeded in their efforts in the area of humanitarianism.
- *Meyera E. Oberndorf Human Rights Award for Achievement in Government*. This award honors government officials or groups (elected or appointed) who protect or promote the awareness of cultural diversity and advocacy of human rights. Nominees must reside or

work in the Commonwealth of Virginia and contribute to promoting human rights within the state.

Community Outreach Efforts

- The Commission assists the Police Department with community policing in targeted neighborhoods. We serve as a link to ensure citizens receive city services and information. We use the “communities of interest” approach to identify the concerns in these communities.
- On a bi-monthly basis, we visit the city’s correctional and juvenile facilities to do a “walk through review” of the services and atmosphere. In addition, the Commission also visits the oceanfront during major holidays to monitor services offered by the city.
- Building Bridges of Understanding Meeting Series. The purpose of these meetings are to learn the definition of human rights from selected groups and to obtain human right concerns from our diverse community based on residents’ personal and work experiences.

Communication

- Serve as a forum for discussions of human rights issues by hosting public forums and community dialogues in which we learn about residents’ personal experiences and their human rights concerns.
- Conduct monthly meetings, which are open the public and give our citizens an opportunity to express their concerns to the Commission. These meetings consist of discussions, special guests and presentations.
- Provide an annual report to City Council which includes issues and a recap of the year.
- Host forums about timely topics.
- Continue to participate on committee and citywide teams that study and address human rights issues.

Commission Members

Fay B. Silverman, Chair
Father James Parke, Vice-Chair
William “Cliff” Rice, 2nd Vice- Chair
Beatriz Amberman
Vivian E. Blaize
Rev. E. Ray Cox, Sr.
Greg Goldfarb
William A. Hearst
Gene J. Hou
Geraldine King Hunt
Mohammad A. Karim, Ph.D.
L. W.”Duff” Kliewer, Jr.
Mike Makela
Dr. Agnes Moon
Teresa Stanley

City Council Liaison

Glenn R. Davis, Jr.
Bob Dyer

Executive Director

Regina Hilliard, Director of Human Resources

Staff Members

Bonnie Hall
Millicent Gallagher

Liaison Members

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

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