



City of Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission

Annual Highlights

1989-2016



1989

- With the 1989 Labor Day Weekend disruptive activities in Virginia Beach, came the concern of “What had cause this type of behavior?”
- In an effort to develop ways to improve the situation in October 1989, Mayor Oberndorf appointed the Labor Day Commission, to examine in detail the events of Labor Day weekend and make recommendations.

1990

- Based on the findings of this commission, the City Council appointed the Labor Day Community Coordination Committee, in February 1990. This group was charge with the centralization of planning, coordination and staging of the 1990 Labor Day events.
- Meanwhile, a group of concerned citizens formed an informal Fellowship Committee to address the human aspects of this disruptive behavior.
- In November of 1990, the City Council appointed a formal Fellowship Committee composed of a diverse cross section of Virginia Beach Citizens. The Fellowship Committee’s role was to research and review studies to determine if there were perceived or real violations of Human Rights in our city. After eight (8) months of research and studies, the Committee recommended to City Council that a Human Rights Commission be established for the City of Virginia Beach.

1991

- On August 6, 1991 the Virginia Beach City Council adopted an Ordinance creating the Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission, charged as follows:
The Human Rights Commission shall serve as an Advisory Agency to the City Council and shall be vested with the following duties, powers and functions:
 - ❖ To institute, conduct, and engage in educational and informational programs for the promotion of mutual understanding and respect among citizens, and the fulfillment of human rights.
 - ❖ To serve as a forum for the discussion of human rights issues, and to conduct studies and propose solutions for the improvement of human relations in the city.
 - ❖ To 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.
 - ❖ To provide city council and the city manager an semi-annual written report of the commission's activities on or before December 30th and June 30th of each year.
 - ❖ To adopt rules and procedures for the conduct of its affairs.



City of Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission

Annual Highlights

1989-2016



1992

- February 4, 1992, eleven (11) persons representative of the diversity of residents in our city, were appointed by City Council to serve on the HRC
- Commission worked to ease tensions in the Seatack Community regarding the need for Recreation facilities and the opposition to Dixie Stampede.

1993

- First Celebrated Human Rights Week with forum titled – “Race Relations in Virginia Beach: Perceptions and Realities (Where Do We Go?)” at the Virginia Beach Center for the Arts.
- HRC logo was developed (designed in contest among students from Norfolk State University)

1994

- Commission started walking the beach on Memorial Weekend and throughout the summer.
- First Human Rights Awards Program at the Virginia Beach Central Library.
- Public Forum in Celebration of Human Rights Week titled “Housing” Know Your Rights and Opportunities.
- Proclamation for Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Observance. Parks and Recreation taught their preschool participants about the life of Dr. King, and the African American Employee Association set up a display on Dr. King in the lobby of the City Hall.
- Prepared a report on minority representation on City Boards and Commissions.
- HRC attended a Human Rights Conference sponsored by the Virginia Council on Human Rights in Richmond, Virginia.

1995

- Public Information Office added 2 questions on Citizen Survey related to nondiscrimination and equal access.
- Public Forum titled – “Affirmative Action: Help You, Hurt You?” at the Virginia Beach Center for the Arts

1996

- Annual Human Rights Awards Program at the Pavilion Convention Center
- Public Forum titled – “Youth: Is There a Problem?”

1997

- Commission received \$10,000 donation from the Duva Foundation to distribute as needed.
- Public Forum titled – “Youth Stereotypes” at Tallwood High School
- Annual Human Rights Awards Program at Virginia Beach Pavilion



City of Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission

Annual Highlights

1989-2016



1997 (continued)

- HRC completed a training program by Virginia Polytechnic Institute. The training prepared them to develop Study Circles Programs and Public Policy Forum.

1998

- Commission received training in Mediations techniques by the Department of Social Services.
- Public Forum regarding Graffiti vandalism (Coming Together: Aftermath and Beyond). Formal Report dated August 4, 1998.
- Annual Human Rights Awards Program at the Virginia Beach Pavilion.

1999

- Commission recommended to City Council that Hate Crime legislation include sexual orientation.
- Annual Human Rights Awards Program at Salem High School.

2000

- Distributed “*United We Stand*” cards with American Flag pins.
- Hosted Virginia Association for Human Rights Conference in Virginia Beach.

2001

- Public Forum on the Death Penalty and Minorities: “*Why the Disproportion?*”
- Hosted Virginia Association for Human Rights Conference in Virginia Beach.

2002

- Public Forum Series: “*Profiling and Stereotyping in America*”. Examined how and why this occurs in a multitude of settings –Law Enforcement, Age, Gender and Sexual Orientation and Religion, Race and Ethnicity.
- HRC hosts roundtable discussion based on comments made at Public Forum, there are “pockets of institutional racism” in our City.
- Based on complaints received regarding remarks made by City Treasurer, Mr. Atkinson, the City of Virginia Beach and the HRC, in conjunction with several regional media and community organizations, co-sponsored a community conversation on news coverage on race, class and ethnicity in Hampton Roads.
- Hosted Virginia Association for Human Rights Conference in Virginia Beach.

2003

- The HRC and the Department of mental health, substance abuse and developmental services sponsored a public forum on “*The Stigma Associated with Mental Disabilities.*”
- HRC began planning for sponsorship opportunities.



City of Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission

Annual Highlights

1989-2016



2003 (continued)

- Designated a HRC representative to serve on the VBCPS Schools' Diversity Awareness Committee.
- HRC addressed concerns from citizens regarding City meetings/program on religious observance. City formed a committee to address this concern.
- Hosted VAHR Conference in Virginia Beach.

2004

- First Diversity Art Contest – Theme: Building Bridges of Understanding for elementary and middle school students. Ceremony held in the City Hall Building.
- VBPD requested assistance from the HRC in the Atlantis Apartment Complex to assist with building their community and civic involvement to help fight crime in the neighborhood off of Birdneck Road.
- Mayor Oberndorf requested the HRC form a subcommittee to address the DOJ's concern of the Police and Fire Hiring Practices.
- Provided an overview of the HRC to county officials of Fauquier County, VA.
- Established and awarded first Dan M. Stone Humanitarian Awards to Beach Health Clinic.
- Annual Human Rights Awards Program was held at the JCC.
- Religious Observance Committee established a list of religious observances and encouraged staff members to be mindful of these observances when planning public events. Each year a list of religious observances are provided to staff members.
- Hosted VAHR Conference in Virginia Beach.

2005

- Established Atlantis Community Task Force (A.C.T.) Commissioner Georgia Allen served as Subcommittee Chair. The purpose of the Task Force was to assist the Police Department with community policing efforts and to identify and determine the needs and concerns of the residents in order to make recommendations to improve the environment. Formal report was given March 2005.
- 2nd Annual Diversity Art Contest – Theme: *“Open Your Eyes to the World Around You”*. Ceremony at the Virginia Beach Center for the Arts.



City of Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission

Annual Highlights

1989-2016



2006

- Citizen Diplomacy Summit at the Convention Center. Organizations included members from educational, business, multicultural and faith based sectors. The summit was organized and hosted by the Office of the Mayor, the Office of the City Clerk, and the HRC.
- VBPD requested assistance from the HRC in the Northridge Community located in the western part of the city. The Northridge Community Outreach Project involved residents of Northridge and various city departments. The Northridge Community Outreach Project's goals were to:
 - Inform residents of all public services available
 - Establish a civic league
 - Develop and implement educational and social programs
 - Improve communication between the Police and residents in an effort to decrease crime and violence
 - Increase the feeling of safety among residents in the community.
- A formal report outlining the strategies and achievements of The Northridge Community Outreach Project was provided in 2006.
- HRC received a Crime Prevention Award from the Virginia Beach Crime Prevention Steering Committee for their significant contributions towards preventing crime in the City of Virginia Beach. (Atlantis Apt and Northridge Communities)
- Coordinated the efforts to have a HRT bus shelter installed along the Princess Anne Road bus route for the City's Municipal Center and Court Buildings.
- Meyera E. Oberndorf Diversity Essay Contest – *"I am Different, but Aren't We All"* for middle and high school students. Ceremony was held at the Virginia Aquarium.
- Created 2nd HRC Vice-Chair position.
- Human Rights Week Celebration - First Harmony Tree – decorated with ornaments that citizens provided their thoughts and insight about the importance of human rights. Tree was displayed in the Virginia Beach Convention Center during the week Dec. 10.
- Started attending the VBCPS Equity Council meetings under the direction of Dr. Esther Monclova-Johnson.
- Letter of endorsement to City Council regarding a parcel of land adjacent to the Seatack Community Recreation Center and owned by the City be used for a full expansion of the Seatack Community Recreation Center.

2007

- To celebrate Human Rights Week, HRC partnered with VBCPS to educate youth about the importance of human rights. Students read "human rights facts" each day as part of the morning announcements and/or participated in activities related to human rights. Schools displayed messages regarding Human Rights issues on their marquees during this week.
- HRC met with the Minority Business Council (MBC) to provide them with an overview of the HRC and to begin a discussion on some of the common objectives both groups strive to achieve.



City of Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission

Annual Highlights

1989-2016



2007 (continued)

- 3rd Annual Diversity Art Contest – Theme: “*Diversity – Let It Shine!*” Ceremony held at the Municipal Center, Bldg. 19.
- HRC began hosting an annual retreat to recap on the previous year’s accomplishments and to develop a work plan for the next year.
- Changed the Annual Human Rights Awards program format and criteria.
- HRC sent a letter of endorsement to City Council for the Affordable Housing Assessment Program.
- 2nd Annual Harmony Tree at the Convention Center.
- Hosted VAHR Conference in Virginia Beach.

2008

- In celebration of Human Rights Week. All high school students were invited to participate in “*A Sea of Red – AIDS Awareness Month*” in Virginia Beach. Students took part in this awareness month by creating an ornament which had a dedication, fact or statistic written on it. These ornaments were collected and an ocean mosaic was created.
- The HRC, VBPD and members of the United Jewish Federation of Tidewater Holocaust Commission visited the Virginia Holocaust Museum and received an abbreviated version of the eight-hour training program “*Law Enforcement and Community: Lessons of the Holocaust*”.
- HRC sent letter to Resort Advisory Commission regarding the lack of diversity in the advertisements published in the 2008 Virginia Travel Guide. CVB met with the HRC and explained the process/method for creating the ads.
- CVB presented their spring/summer program plan in the first quarter of 2009.
- Commissioners attended the South Hampton Roads Regional Conference on Ending Homelessness.
- City Council appointed Ron A. Villanueva and Glenn R. Davis as liaisons to the HRC.
- Annual Human Rights Awards Program held at the Virginia Beach Convention Center.
- City adopted Administrative Directive (Aug 1) on Illegal Immigrants.

2009

- HRC added tours of the City’s Correctional Facility and Juvenile Detention Center to their ancillary duties.
- Established the first Meyera E. Oberndorf Human Rights Award for Achievement in Government, awarded to Beatriz Amberman.
- 2nd Diversity Art and Essay Contest – Theme: “*Reasons for Hope*” at the Sandler Center
- City Council appointed Glenn Davis and Bob Dyer as liaisons to the HRC.
- Annual Human Rights Awards Program held at Virginia Beach Convention Center.
- City released Progress Report: 20 Years After Greek fest (Aug.)



City of Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission

Annual Highlights

1989-2016



2010

- HRC Co-sponsored, assisted and attended the City's Diversity Symposium (Oct. 13)
- Created the "Building Bridges of Understanding" Series – Theme: "What Does Human Rights Mean to Me?"
- Created the Human Rights Resolution signed by City Council and officially presented at the Human Rights Week Celebration.
- Adopted a Sponsorship Agreement for future scholarships and projects, approved by Rod Ingram.
- Annual Human Rights Awards Program held at the Virginia Beach Convention Center.
- An Ordinance to Amend Section 2-459 of the City Code to increase the Membership of the HRC from (11) to (15) was approved.

2011

- In celebration of Human Rights Week, the HRC coordinated a coat drive dedicated to the homeless youth population and collected 300 coats in 5 days. Drop off sites were all Police Precincts and Law Enforcement Training Academy.
- HRC began attending Police CAC meetings on a regular basis.
- Co-sponsored VBPD 2nd Precinct Community Open House.
- Developed 3 year Work Plan based on recommendations from the *Building Bridges of Understanding Report*.
- Annual Human Rights Awards Program held at Virginia Beach Convention Center.
- Presented City Council with the *Building Bridges of Understanding Report* and Recommendations.

2012

- HRC hosted the first cultural festival – "Autumn Colors – Leaves of Diversity" at VB Farmer's Market.
- Established the first Helen P. Shropshire Human Rights Youth Award, and awarded to Taylor Hooker.
- Co-sponsored Black Law Enforcement Pioneer Ceremony.
- Co-sponsored VBPD 2nd Precinct Community Open House.
- Human Rights Week Presentation at Williams Farm Recreation Center. Presentation on human rights, a dance performance by Brandon Middle School Step Team and the kick off of the coat drive.
- 2nd Annual Coat Drive. Collected 150 coats and 793 hats, scarves and gloves in 5 days.
- Annual Human Rights Awards Program held at the Virginia Beach Convention Center.
- Overview of the HRC presented to City of Charlottesville Human Rights Task Force.
- Co-sponsored *Native American Heritage Month* Celebration at the MEO Central Library.
- Submitted letter of support for VBPD to the Commission for Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). VBPD was awarded their first Gold Standard Excellence Award



City of Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission

Annual Highlights

1989-2016



2012 (continued)

- Submitted recommendations for the 2013 Legislative Package to the General Assembly. The Commission recommended:
 - Expansion of the Virginia Human Rights Act to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation
 - The General Assembly provide meaningful increases to funding for mental healthcare services and housing
- HRC endorsed the *Native American Proclamation*. Councilmember Dyer and HRC Chair Silverman presented the proclamation at the Native American Festival at the oceanfront in June.
- Commissioner Stanley and other community advocates reached out to the homeless community to seek input on the Disposal of Unclaimed Property (File: CA12127 Amend Secs. 27-21, 27-22 and 27-25). The HRC provided this information to the VBPD.
- Co-sponsored VBPD Mural Contest

2013

- Partnership with the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities to establish scholarship for first Helen P. Shropshire Human Rights Memorial Scholarship, awarded to Macon Spruill of Princess Anne High School.
- Mayor Sessoms and the HRC hosted the Hispanic Dialogue with Community Leaders.
- Medicaid Expansion Act Resolution to City Council.
- Hosted Virginia Association for Human Rights Meeting & Conference in Virginia Beach.
- Chairman Parke received VAHR Commissioner of the Year and Bonnie Hall received Staff Member of the Year.
- Co-sponsored VBPD 3rd Precinct Community Open House (cancelled due to inclement weather)
- Co-sponsored VBPD Mural Contest
- VB Fire Department - Recruitment and Workforce Presentation. HRC provided recruitment ideas and Hispanic community contact information
- Public Forum on Dec. 10 (Human Rights Day) titled: “*Help Shape the Community Where You Want to Live*”.
- First Homelessness Awareness Week sponsored by the HRC. Collected blankets, coats and participated in the National Homelessness Memorial on December 21.
- General Assembly agenda submittals for 2014 package to City Council to include; Expansion of Virginia Human Rights Act, Increased Funding for Mental Health Care, Support Medicaid Expansion
- Councilmembers Dyer and Kane served as City Council liaisons

2014

- Hosted Virginia Beach Homelessness Awareness Week
- HRC served as Beach Weekend Observers in April and provided report to City officials
- Launched Cultural Community Conversation - Part I



City of Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission

Annual Highlights

1989-2016



2014 (continued)

- Annual Human Rights Awards Program held in March. Awarded 7 awards.
- Hosted VAHR Conference in June
- Cliff Rice elected as HRC chairman, Vivian Blaize as vice-chair and Teresa Stanley as 2nd vice-chair in June
- General Assembly agenda submittals for 2015 package to City Council to include:
 - Expansion of Virginia Human Rights Act
 - Increased Funding for Mental Health Care
 - Support Medicaid Expansion
- Councilmembers Dyer and Kane served as City Council liaisons
- HRC members began attending Hampton Roads Inclusion & Diversity Consortium meetings

2015

- 2nd Annual Homelessness Awareness Week
- Cultural Community Conversations - Part II
- LGBT Taskforce addressed LGBT inclusion efforts in VBCPS
- On-going “*Just Faith*” Program to increase communication and understanding between Christians and Muslims religions.
- Hosted VAHR Annual Meeting and Conference. Congressman Bobby Scott, keynote speaker, and Delegate Glenn Davis, guest speaker both spoke about voter suppression.
- Cliff Rice elected as HRC chairman, Vivian Blaize as vice-chair and Teresa Stanley as 2nd vice-chair in June for a second term
- Vivian Blaize elected as VAHR Treasurer
- General Assembly agenda submittals for 2016 package to City Council to include; Expansion of Virginia Human Rights Act, Increased Funding for Mental Health Care, Support Medicaid Expansion and Voting Rights Suppression
- Letter of support to City Council about VB School Board making revisions to VBCPS Policy 5.7 & Policy 4.4 to include sexual orientation and gender identity as protected classes.
- Submitted letter of support for VBPD to the Commission for Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). They were awarded their second Gold Standard Excellence Award Letter of support for CALEA for VBPD.
- Mayor presented ADA proclamation
- Submitted efforts made by the HRC to the Human Rights Campaign Survey
- Councilmembers Dyer and Kane served as City Council liaisons

2016

- LGBT Liaison assigned for the VBPD at the suggestion of the HRC
- Continue participation in the “*Just Faith*” Program, to increase communication and understanding between Christians and Muslims religions.



City of Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission

Annual Highlights

1989-2016



2016 (continued)

- Letter of support to City Council for the implementation of partial expansion of full-day kindergarten programs at VBCPS.
- Letter of Support to City Council for the expansion of Light Rail, citing Human Rights Implications.
- HRC began regularly attending City Council meetings
- Submitted efforts made by the HRC to the Human Rights Campaign Survey
- Annual Human Rights Awards Ceremony held at the Virginia Beach Convention Center, Seven (7) Human Rights Award Honorees
- Councilmembers Dyer and Kane served as City Council liaisons