



City of Virginia Beach

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HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
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BUILDING 18

2424 COURTHOUSE DRIVE
VIRGINIA BEACH, VA 23456-9056

VIRGINIA BEACH HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMISSION MEMBERS:

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FRANCES KNIGHT THOMPSON

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LEGAL COUNSEL:

ROD INGRAM, DEPUTY CITY ATTORNEY

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION LIAISON:

TRACIE LIGUID

VIRGINIA BEACH HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Thursday, March 14, 2019 – 4 p.m.

City Municipal Center, Building 19
2424 Courthouse Drive

Members Present: Sylvia Nery-Strickland (Vice-Chairwoman), Teresa Stanley, Rabbi Israel Zoberman, Jojo Orencia Jr., Nicholas Dinonno, Thomasine Cubine, Luis Rivera, Father James Parke, Allison White, Cheryll Caalim, Vivian Blaize, Frances Knight Thompson, Cliff Rice, Michael Berlucchi, Dr. Virginia Jenkot and Beatriz Amberman (via phone)

Members Absent: Rajeeb Islam, Ron Taylor, Mary Mathena, and Lt. Lois Thompson (Sheriff's Office)

Guests: Herta Okonkwo

Staff Present: Regina Hilliard (Executive Director), Ron Ingram (Deputy City Attorney), Deputy Chief Tony Zucaro (VBPD), Lt. Scott Wichtendal (VBPD), Sgt. Michele "Shelly" Meister (VBPD), Tracie Liguid, and Shelley Johnson (Human Resources)

AGENDA

- I. **Call to Order/Roll Call/Minutes/Agenda Approval –**
Chair Nery- Strickland
- II. **Special Introductions and Acknowledgments**
- III. **Chairman's Report – Sylvia Nery-Strickland**
Vice Chair Special Election
Vote to hold special election or hold off for June elections
Committees – Official Votes needed for following:
Vote on needed committees (Logo, Anti-Bullying, By-Laws)
Proposed Possible Student HRC Committee
Vote to include non-HRC members to serve on committees
Vote Special Committee for past commissioners
Guest Chair - Student Commissioner to Chair a meeting
New Liaison – VBPS, Dottie Holtz, Alternate, Kimberly Melnyk
Retreat Part II - TBD
- IV. **Committee Reports**
Oceanfront Committee – Strickland/Deputy Chief Zucaro
Anti-Bullying Committee – Frances Knight Thompson
Awards Committee – Michael Berlucchi
Logo Task Force – Jojo Orencia
Mental Health Task Force- Tommie Cubine
Pastors/Leadership Liaison – Teresa Stanley
- V. **Liaison Report/Updates**
- VI. **Staff Report/Updates**
VBHRC Inquiries
Tickets to State of City - *How many can we have?*
Tickets to Va. Center for Inclusive Communities Humanitarian
Awards – *Vivian and Jim*
Invitation to MOCA Art Opening – *Everyone is invited*
- VII. **Old Business**
Special Reports – Bus Trip to DC – Michael Berlucchi and attendees
Special Reports – MLK events - attendees
- VIII. **New Business**
- IX. **Citizens Remarks**
Adjournment

I. Call to Order/Roll Call/Minutes (February 14, 2019)

The meeting was called to order by Chairwoman Nery Strickland at 4:06 p.m.

Roll was taken of the Commissioners, staff and guests in attendance. The minutes from the February 14, 2019 meeting were reviewed. Corrections were provided by both Commissioner Cubine and Commissioner Stanley on page 4 under Continuing Work of the VBHRC.

Commissioner Blaize made a motion to approve the meeting minutes as corrected and Commissioner Parke seconded the motion. The meeting minutes from the February 14, 2019 were approved unanimously.

II. Special Introductions and Acknowledgments

Regina introduced both Tracie Liquid, the new HRC Liaison and Mary Graessle, the new Employee Relations Manager to the members of the Human Rights Commission.

On behalf of the Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission, Chairwoman Nery Strickland presented Letters of Appreciation to both William "Cliff" Rice and Vivian Blaize. Cliff was appointed in December 2009 and served as both the commissioner, vice chairperson and chairperson. Vivian was appointed in April 2010 and served as a commissioner and vice chairwoman.

III. Chairman's Report – Chairwoman Nery-Strickland

Vice Chair Special Election

During an emergency meeting held on November 20, 2018, the Commissioners agreed in the event that the Chair and Vice Chair are unavailable to fulfill their duties to lead a regular HRC meeting that responsibility would be assigned as follows:

- The most recent former Chair
- The most recent former Vice Chair
- The Most recent former 2nd Vice chair

The responsibility to lead the meeting would continue in the manner as described above until someone was willing and able to lead the meeting.

The Commissioners have unanimously voted to delay the decision to appoint a second 2nd vice chair seat to the HRC until the June elections.

Committees (Vote on needed committees)

HRC Logo Committee – Members of the HRC Logo Committee, chaired by Commissioner Orenca, Jr. have been working with both BCF, a local advertising agency and members of the city's Media & Communications Group to redesign the current HRC logo. This logo will be used on letters and any material related to the HRC. The committee provided examples from both BCF and the Media & Communication Group and compared their designs with the current HRC logo. Divided in to two groups there were 14 examples of a revised HRC logo. The current logo was created in 1993 by students at Norfolk State University and will remain in place until a new HRC logo has been selected. Commissioners have been asked to review the material and provide feedback at the next HRC Meeting scheduled for Thursday, April 11.

Anti-Bullying Committee – Commissioner Islam and Commissioner Knight-Thompson met in November 2018 with members Virginia Beach School Board to discuss the possibility of establishing a committee to address bullying. Commissioner Knight-Thompson recently met with Chairwoman Nery-Strickland and suggested that this committee would be more effective and better served if it was centered within the Virginia Beach School System. The committee would continue working towards their mission and the HRC would become a work resource and/or forum for the schools/parents to contact regarding their concerns. More importantly, elimination of this committee does not mean the issue is not an HRC-focus the committee is less. Information would be shared and provided through the HRC's multi-faceted platforms and outreach programs. Commissioner Knight-Thompson made a motion to dismantle this committee and Commissioner Blaize seconded the motion.

By-Laws Committee – Chairwoman Nery-Strickland made a motion for Commissioner Rivera to continue to chair this committee. In May 2019, the Commission will determine if the By Laws will need to be further reviewed. Commissioner Thompson-Knight seconded the motion.

Possible Student HRC Committee – The City of Fairfax, Virginia has created a Student HRC Commission. This is an idea that the Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission would like to further consider and possibly develop their own student commission. The Commissioners would like to contact the Fairfax Student HRC Commission and invite them to an upcoming HRC Meeting.

Vote to include non-HRC Members to serve on Committees/ Vote Special Committee for Past Commissioners – Commissioner Berlucchi reminded his fellow Commissioners that all HRC Commissioners are appointed by City Council. It is not a prerequisite to serve as an associate member of the HRC but allowing new members to join the HRC keeps the diversity alive. Commissioner Stanley agreed and said the Commission will remain robust by encouraging new members to serve and actively participate with the HRC.

Guest Chair – Student Commissioner to Chair a Meeting – Chairwoman Nery-Strickland made a motion to allow Student Commissioner DiNonno to chair one short HRC meeting to gain experience before he leaves for college in June. Student Commissioner DiNonno's has been accepted to Virginia Military Institute in the fall and his last HRC meeting is scheduled for June 13, 2019. The Commissioners voted unanimously to allow Student Commissioner DiNonno to chair one meeting. Deputy City Attorney Ingram has agreed to co-chair this meeting and provide Student Commissioner DiNonno with guidance throughout the meeting. Student Commissioner Caalim will remain on the HRC Commission until July 2020.

New Liaison – Dottie Holtz has been appointed the new Virginia Beach Public Schools HRC Liaison. Kimberly Melnick will serve as the alternate. The liaison is not required to attend all HRC Meetings but they will attend when there is pertinent information to share with the Commission or when the schools have something that the HRC has requested assistance with.

HRC Retreat – Part II – On October 18, 2018 the VBHRC held its annual retreat. The retreat was held at the Parks & Recreation new Administration Building and facilitated by Howard Waldie IV. During this event the facilitator provided some feedback about how the HRC should move forward in 2019. The Commissioners decided that the second half of the retreat would be held in February 2019. Based on current events and scheduling conflicts, the Commissioners have been asked to provide their availability to Tracie so she can coordinate/schedule the second part of the retreat in 2019. Commissioner Jenkot stated that the Commissioners still have a lot things to talk about and how the Commissioners must continue to work together on their shared goals not become silos on the Commission. Commissioner Zoberman motioned to hold off on scheduling the second half of the retreat until after the June elections. Commissioner Parke seconded that motion.

IV. Committee Reports

Oceanfront Committee – Chairwoman Nery-Strickland and Deputy Chief Zucaro

Deputy Chief Zucaro provided the Commissioners a brief overview regarding the *Something in the Water 2019* event otherwise formerly known as Week 17 College Weekend. The event is scheduled to begin on the afternoon of Friday, April 26 and close out the evening of Sunday, April 28. City of Virginia Beach officials are estimating upwards of 35,000 patrons (students and locals) that are going to attend the large entertainment venue. Locally, hospitality records indicate that reservations for both hotels in and around the Oceanfront have met capacity levels. Owners of local Airbnb's are experiencing an upswing in business and they are steadily reaching maximum occupancy levels. Reports show that hotels in and around the Chesapeake (Greenbrier) area are being reserved for this event, as well.

Lt. Scott Wichtendal and Sgt Michele "Shelly" Meister were invited to speak to the Commissioners to provide some insight as to how the VBPD and the HRC Commissioners will work together on the 2019 Weekend Observer Team. The Commissioner's participation on the team will be on a volunteer basis and those who are interested in participating will be assigned one 3-hour shift daily to observe any activities and interactions at the Oceanfront. There will also be one "lead observer" assigned to each 12 person team. Tracie Ligid and Lt. Scott Wichtendal will coordinate the teams and the shift schedules with the Commissioners. The shifts are scheduled to begin Friday, April 26 at 9:00 p.m. and end Sunday, April 28 at or around 10:00 p.m. The VBPD will assign the Commissioners to each identified target area between 15th Street and 16th Street to 24th Street and 2nd Street (Rudy Inlet/Loop) to 32nd Street. Observers are not permitted to carry a weapon and shall not attempt to resolve a conflict on their own. Observers must alert the nearest police officer for assistance. Additionally, Observers shall refrain from running towards an incident, and instead will follow instructions from the law enforcement officers and get to a safe location out of harm's way.

Traffic management is a major concern for this event. Commissioners who will be volunteering are being asked to drive to the designated satellite parking area between Sugar Plum Bakery and Linkhorn Elementary School where they will be shuttled to and from their assigned areas.

The VBPD and the HRC will hold a special meeting on Thursday, March 21 at 3:00 in Building 18 to discuss the details of this program. The meeting will be open to the public.

Anti-Bullying Committee (Additional information listed under Chairman's Report)

Awards Committee. None at this time were presented. During the February 15, HRC Committee Meeting, Commissioner Berlucchi and his fellow committee members made a motion to postpone the 25th Annual Human Rights Awards Ceremony scheduled for April 4, 2019 to a later date and time. The committee members will contact those who have submitted applications notifying them of the cancellation. The committee will reconvene in June to discuss moving forward with the ceremony.

Logo Task Force (Additional information listed under Chairman's Report)

Mental Health Task Force

Earlier in this meeting, Commissioner Cubine requested to have the minutes from the February 15 - HRC Meeting amended. The Commissioners approved the motion unanimously. The minutes will be corrected and reposted on the HRC SharePoint site.

Commissioner Cubine invited the Commissioners to the Mental Health Awareness/St. Hatrick's Night between the Norfolk Admirals and the Jacksonville Icemen. This event is hosted by both NAMI Coastal Virginia and the Norfolk Admirals and will be held on Saturday, March 23 at 7:05 at the Scope Area in Norfolk, VA.

Commissioner Cubine would like to remind everyone that May is Mental Health Awareness month and has requested that the HRC present a proclamation to both the Mayor and City Council during this time.

Commissioner Cubine provided the Commissioners with a copy of an article provided by NAMI Coastal Virginia and written by Sue Abderholden dated on March 7, 2019. The article entitled *It's Not Stigma, It's Discrimination* compares the difference between what stigma is and how it can be easily confused with discrimination. This information was provided in each of the Commissioner's information packet tonight.

Pastors/Leadership Liaison

Commissioner Stanley would also like to remind everyone that the Art of Humanity: In Honor of the Season for Non-Violence event is scheduled for April 6, 2019. The event will showcase a permanent mural (image) of both Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi in the shape of a butterfly which will be painted on a side wall of the Little Theatre of VB located at 550 Barberton Drive, Virginia Beach, VA.

V. Staff Reports/Updates

- **Tickets to State of the City** – The HRC Commission will purchase three (3) tickets to attend the State of the City ceremony on Wednesday, March 20. The three commissioners who will be attending are Dr. Virginia “Ginger” Jenkot, Vivian Blaize and Luis Rivera. The tickets will be purchased before the event and the seats will be reserved under their names.
- **Tickets to attend the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities Humanitarian Awards** have been purchased and will be provided to both Commissioners Blaize and Commissioner Parke. The ceremony will be held on Thursday, March 28, 2019 at the Westin Virginia Beach Town Center.
- **Visit to the National Museum of African American History & Culture (Update)**
The Commissioners thanked Commissioner Berlucchi for all of his hard work in coordinating their recent visit to the National Museum of African American History & Culture on Friday, February 22. The field trip was an overall success and everyone who attended was very appreciative for his efforts in arranging this event. The Commissioners have proposed continuing this tradition and would like to work together to schedule other joint events for the Commissioners to attend.

VI. Citizen Remarks

Herta Okonkwo introduced herself to the Commissioners and explained why she was invited to attend the meeting. She explained to the Commissioners how she would like to have their support behind her efforts to *Promote the Season of Nonviolence*. Ms. Okonkwo's has created a self-designed flag which represents the “symbol of victory”. Each flag costs \$39 and her goal is to have these flags flown at local schools. She provided her business card to the Commissioners and she has requested that they visit her website: seasonofnonviolence.com for more information.

VII. Adjournment

Commissioner Berlucchi made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Commissioner Blaize seconded; meeting was adjourned at 5:45 p.m.