

Members Present: Sylvia Nery-Strickland (Chairwoman), Dr. Virginia Jenkot (Vice Chairwoman), Teresa Stanley, Rabbi Israel Zoberman, Joe Burnsworth, Beatriz Amberman, Tommie Cubine, JoJo Orenca Jr, Allison White, Ron Taylor, Rajeeb Islam, and Jamal Gunn, David Calliott, Frances Knight-Thompson, Carla Hesseltine, Luis Rivera and Mark Stevens

Members Absent: Cheryl Caalim and Pearl Renwick

Staff Present: Regina Hilliard (Human Resources), Mary Graessle (Human Resources), Dominique McKinnon (Human Resources)

Liaisons Present: Tony Zucaro (Deputy Chief), David Squires (Captain), Michele Meister (Lieutenant), Henri Norris (Lieutenant), Lois Thompson (Lieutenant)

I. Call to Order/Roll Call

The meeting was called to order by Chairwoman Nery-Strickland at 4:09 p.m.

Roll call was taken of the Commissioners. Student Commissioners Caalim and Renwick were absent.

Mark Stevens, the new Commissioner, was welcomed and each Commissioner took a moment to introduce themselves in return.

II. Citizen Concern

Chairwoman Nery-Strickland made an adjustment to the agenda to welcome two citizens of Virginia Beach to voice a concern of theirs.

Ken Simmons and Tina Simmons spoke to the Commission about their ward, Stephanie, who is bipolar and has a mental disability. Stephanie lives in a group home. They have filed complaints about the group home through adult protective services, who have found cases of abuse. These reports were forwarded to the police department, but they are not being tracked or followed up on. They spoke with representatives with the 1st and 3rd police precinct and were told that persons with low IQs are arrested when police are called to a scene. Stephanie was arrested over the summer without medication for her stage four cancer treatment. Adult protective services stepped in for her to get her radiation treatment. During the ten-day period that she was going through treatment while in custody of the Sherriff's department, she had no access to a shower or different clothing. She developed an urinary tract infection and sores.

Mr. Simmons has been making complaints since August with no results, until he reached a Captain who sent him an email apologizing. He said that is not good enough. He does not want this to happen to someone else and that is why he has brought his complaint to the Human Rights Commission.

Lieutenant Henri Norris reported that the complaint is an ongoing investigation with Internal Affairs. Lieutenant Lois Thompson reported that she is speaking with Professional Standards on the investigation.

Ron Taylor offered to give Ken and Tina Simmons the contact information for Reginald Daye of the State Human Right Commission.

Rod Ingram stated that he will work with the Sherriff department to make sure the investigation is done properly.

Chairwoman Nery-Strickland stated the Commission will follow up on the matter.

III. Minutes Approval

The January 9th —Meeting Minutes were reviewed. Commissioner Islam suggested the minutes be accepted with one correction to item #1 – Commissioner Islam in place of “Commission Raj”.

Chairwoman Nery-Strickland made a motion to approve the minutes with one correction. Commissioner Amberman seconded the motion. The January 9th Meeting minutes were revised and will be posted with the correction.

IV. HRC Retreat Facilitator Conclusion

Orelious Walker, analyst from the City's Strategy, Transparency, Innovation and Resiliency (STIR) office presented the HRC's 2020 Work Plan that outlined the goals for the Commission in the next fiscal year. He highlighted the work that the Commission needs to complete in the next five months, the most important being the On-Boarding process and the Mini Manual for policies and procedures.

Commissioner Gunn suggested a process of addressing citizen complaints and Chairwoman Nery-Strickland stated that a complaint procedure was being developed. Mary Graessle, Human Resources Employee Relations Manager, clarified that the department does have a log of complaint calls that come into the office and the referrals that were made for those complaints. Regina Hilliard, Director of Human Resources, added that the Human Rights Commission liaison does find resources for the complaint calls that come through the office, but maybe the Commission needs to be notified about complaints received. She also stated that some complaints come straight to the Commission meetings. Commissioner Stanley stated that forums are places where the Commission can do field work to address citizen complaints and be proactive.

Chairwoman Nery-Strickland stated that the Commission will have to discuss and vote on acceptance of initiatives within the 2020 Work Plan by July.

Commissioner Islam asked to make a motion to accept the Work Plan until June 30th. Chairwoman Nery-Strickland seconded the motion to open it for discussion. Commissioner Islam amended his motion to make the Work Plan a living document until June 30th.

The Commission voted to adopt the Human Rights Commission's 2020 Work Plan as a living document to be edited at any time by vote until June 30th.

V. Reports

Chairwoman Nery-Strickland asked that those up for reappointment send her an email stating "yes" or "no" if they want to be reappointed and the reason why.

Chairwoman Nery-Strickland asked that the Commissioners send her their attendance as well for an accurate reporting to the City Clerk's office.

Chairwoman Nery-Strickland reported on the decision to remove the Human Rights Commission from the Pastor Leaders Community Police Relations roundtable. The citizens within the roundtable are meeting without the police to create recommendations to restructure the Investigative Review Panel. Commissioner Stanley reported that at the last roundtable meeting, there was a complaint discussed in regard to a citizen's adverse experience with the police. The table is working together to resolve the friction and find other approaches using models of 21st Century policing. Tony Zucaro added that the citizen's complaint was investigated, and the citizen was informed of the results of the investigation. The citizen petitioned the Investigative Review Panel twice, was declined and became very vocal about the Investigative Review Panel process. The Investigative Review Panel process is formal based on law, constitutional protections, policies, procedures and training protocols. Tony Zucaro reported that he has submitted a written proposal to the roundtable about the policies and procedures, and is waiting for a response.

Rod Ingram stated that the concern with the Human Rights Commission being involved in this discussion of the Investigative Review Panel, is that it could give the false impression that one council-appointed commission is in conflict with another council-appointed commission without City Council's request.

Chairwoman Nery-Strickland reported that Commissioner Rivera was selected as a second observer of the incident and the decision was made to remove the Human Rights Commission from the roundtable until the Commission has further information. Chairwoman Nery-Strickland suggested all available Commissioners attend the next roundtable on March 12th at 7pm and observe the discussion.

VI. Updates

Commissioner Amberman spoke about the Public Forums Committee meetings. The Committee has sent out invitations to potential panelists and speakers for the upcoming Community Conversation: Human Rights & Race Relations. Two people have accepted the invitation and a keynote speaker has yet to be selected. Commissioner Amberman welcomed any suggestions for another name for the forum which will discuss issues of race. There will be resource tables after the discussion for members of the community to connect with organizations that can assist them. Commissioner Cubine asked for volunteers to work on the night of the Forum on March 31st.

Captain Squires invited the Commissioners to attend the Police Recruiting Expo on Saturday, March 14th from 9am to 1pm at the Law Enforcement Training Academy - 411 Integrity Way, Virginia Beach, VA. The police department is in need of more qualified minority recruits. The expo will give citizens a closer look at the police department's hiring process. Captain Squires asked members of the Commission to bring any qualified applicants, ages 20 to 64, to the expo to give the department the opportunity to meet them. There will also be an opportunity for members of the community to speak with a developing taskforce that is working to bring more qualified applicants into the department.

VII. Adjournment

Chairwoman Nery-Strickland adjourned the meeting at 6:10 p.m.

Next Meeting:
Thursday, March 12, 2020 @ 4:00 p.m.
City Municipal Center (Building 19)