

*In accordance with Virginia Code § 2.2-3708.2, Virginia Code § 15.2-1413 and the City's Continuity of Government Ordinance adopted on March 31, 2020, and Chapter 1289 of the 2020 Acts of Assembly as amended, I hereby call for a **MEETING BY ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION MEANS** of the Human Rights Commission. This meeting was held by electronic means using the Webex videoconferencing platform because of the COVID-19 Pandemic emergency.*

**September 10, 2020**  
**4pm**

*The purpose of the meeting is to discuss and transact the business of the Commission.*

**Members Present:** Sylvia Nery-Strickland (Chairwoman), Dr. Virginia Jenkot (Vice Chairwoman), Beatriz Amberman, Zakkiyya Anderson, David Calliott, Thomasine Cubine, Jamal Gunn, Carla Hesselstine, Frances Knight Thompson, Luis Rivera, Teresa Stanley, Mark Stevens, Ron Taylor, Rabbi Israel Zoberman

**Members Absent:** Joe Burnsworth (excused), Emiliano "Jojo" Orenca (unexcused), Allison White (unexcused)

**Staff Present:** Stacy Hawks (Human Resources), Dominique McKinnon (HRC Liaison)

**Liaisons Present:** Interim Chief Tony Zucaro, Lieutenant Michelle Meister, Captain Ken Spivey, Captain William Zelms, Captain Henri Norris, Rod Ingram (Deputy City Attorney), Dr. LaQuiche Parrott

### **I. Call to Order/Roll Call**

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

Roll call of the Commissioners was taken. Commissioner Burnsworth, Orenca and White were absent.

### **II. Minutes Approval**

Vice Chair Jenkot made a motion to approve the minutes. Commissioner Amberman seconded the motion. By a vote of 13-0 the minutes from the August 13<sup>th</sup> meeting were approved.

### **III. New Commissioner Welcome**

Zakkiyya Anderson, the newly appointed Commissioner, was welcomed by Chair Nery-Strickland and she introduced herself to the Commission.

### **IV. Recruitment Presentation from Chief Zucaro**

Chief Zucaro introduced members from his team that were present for the meeting: Lieutenant Michele Meister, Captain Ken Spivey, Commanding Officer of Professional Development and Training, and Captain Billy Zelms, Commanding Officer of Special Projects. Captain Spivey gave a presentation to the Commission on the hiring and selection process of the Virginia Beach Police Department.

The selection process starts with an applicant submitting the City of Virginia Beach Employment Application along with a personal history questionnaire. Providing there are no automatic disqualifies from these submissions, the applicant will continue through the process with:

- Written Exam – a study guide is available online
- Physical Ability Test – evaluates core strength, flexibility, cardiovascular endurance and upper body strength
- Background/Polygraph
- Pre-Screening Board – the board consists of representatives from the Police Academy, Police Operations and Human Resources
- Oral Panel – an interview by a panel of 4-6 individuals (officers, supervisors and a Human Resources representative)
- Psychological Exam
- Medical Exam

Captain Spivey stated that the selection process is so rigorous because police officers are given tremendous amount of authority and public trust that they don't want to diminish. The department looks for candidates who are honest and will do the right thing even when no one is looking. Once the selection process is complete, the applicant can enter the Academy.

The Academy is 26 weeks long and includes more than 1,000 instructional hours of training, defensive tactics, scenario training and academic testing. After the 26 weeks, there is a Post Academy Police Officer Training Program for 16 weeks where they are on the job with their training officer. Captain Spivey highlighted that the Department of Criminal Justice requires 480 hours of training and the Virginia Beach Police Department delivers 960 hours of training in the Academy.

Captain Spivey reported on the Professional Development Program where officers receive pay increases upon passing a written test on departmental policies, completing training classes or earning college credits.

Captain Spivey reported on the recruiting challenges that the department is facing, such as, fewer applicants, COVID-19 and diversity in recruitment remain a challenge. All police departments nationwide are experiencing these same challenges. The Virginia Beach Police Department has formed a Recruiting Consortium with citizens and faith/business members to assist with their recruiting efforts. The department has also engaged with HBCUs and partnered with the LGBTQ Life Center to increase diversity in their recruitment. The department is working on developing a Police Cadet Program to help attract young people right out of high school as a police recruit must be 21 when they graduate from the Academy.

Vice Chair Jenkot asked if the department provides the written exam in other languages and if accommodations are made for those who may have a hearing impairment. Lieutenant Meister stated that they will research if the exam is available in other languages and Deputy City Attorney Rod Ingram stated that the City would make any reasonable accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Commissioner Amberman asked about the possession of military equipment in the department, the use of body cams and if the scenario training includes interaction with members of the minority community. Chief Zucaro stated that the department does have some military type equipment, such as four-wheel vehicles, an armored vehicle, infrared night vision goggles and camouflage uniforms. All these items comply with federal and state guidelines and are approved by the Virginia State Police. Chief Zucaro reported that the department is in Phase 3 of the four phases of their body worn camera program. This means that 300 officers are assigned to a body worn camera and in the Virginia Beach Police department, officers are assigned to two body worn cameras. Chief Zucaro stated that the scenario training involves active participation and role playing with very broad, real life encounters.

Commissioner Thompson asked if personal history questionnaire is a barrier and if it has been reviewed considering a small percentage of applicants complete the questionnaire. Chief Zucaro stated that the questionnaire is very comprehensive and speculated that perhaps applicants don't complete it because it is so cumbersome. Captain Spivey stated that now that he and Lieutenant Meister are a part of the professional development and training department, they can be a fresh pair for eyes to review the process. Commissioner Thompson asked if the questionnaire was only available online and Captain Spivey stated that they can help facilitate the completion of the questionnaire for any applicant. Commissioner Thompson stated that some people are apprehensive about putting their personal information online and that may be a barrier.

Commissioner Rivera asked if there is a fast track program for cadets in the academy who are showing great potential for leadership. Chief Zucaro reported that the recently adopted professional development program promotes workforce development and professionalism and offers coaching and mentoring opportunities.

Commissioner Stanley asked if the cadet program has started and Chief Zucaro stated that they are working on finalizing the proposal for the program. The program proposal must be approved by the City Manager and funding for the program has to be established. The cadet program will expose the police cadets to certain core trainings within the academy such as constitutional law or implicit bias and help prepare them for entry into the Academy. He stated that many people who have reviewed the proposal are in favor of it and are advocating for it.

Chief Zucaro reported that he has sent a message to all minority members of the Police department asking them to join a conversation about the challenges within the department, what recruiting challenges they are facing and he has asked them to identify action items to help with recruiting efforts.

Lieutenant Meister reported that they have sent out a survey to the whole department asking officers if they are interested in recruiting out in the diverse communities that they are involved with or would like to get involved with. This would help to restart the recruiting efforts and increase community engagement.

## **V. Chairman's Report**

Chair Nery-Strickland asked everyone to review the drafts of the Work Plan and On-Boarding packet that Liaison McKinnon emailed out to the Commission.

Commissioner Thompson stated that she would feel more comfortable if the On-Barding packet was adopted before it was distributed. Liaison McKinnon clarified that since the packet is still a draft and a working document it has not been distributed yet. Liaison McKinnon suggested an addition to the packet with a reference to required training for Commissioners.

## **VI. Committee Reports**

Liaison McKinnon reported on the Awards Committee's decision to change the recognition video to a video celebrating Human Rights Day with each Commissioner speaking for 15 seconds about what human rights means to them. This would also be an opportunity for the Human Rights Commission to introduce themselves to Virginia Beach. The video would be 4 -5 minutes long with an introduction from the Chair and a closing from the Vice Chair. The video would broadcast on December 10<sup>th</sup> on VBTv and it would be posted on the City's YouTube channel and the HRC's Facebook page. The change is being suggested due to the time constraint and possible low turnout with submissions from the public for the recognition video.

There were no objections and a consensus was reached to proceed with the recommended Human Rights Day video.

Liaison McKinnon stated that she will be sending out instructions for recording the video. The proposed deadline for submitting your video is September 30<sup>th</sup> for the Communications Office to finalize the complete video by October 10<sup>th</sup>.

Chair Nery-Strickland reported that the COVID-19 Task force has continued to share information about the pandemic. They have posted on Facebook information on COVID-19 and mental health that Commissioner Cubine has shared. Vice Chair Jenkot continues to share weekly stats on COVID-19 and they are posted on Facebook.

Commissioner Stanley reported that the Legislative Collaborative Table will be having an event on human rights, equity and social justice issues on September 27<sup>th</sup>. She will share the invitation with the Commission. She also stated that the Legislative Collaborative Table will do a Hampton Roads visit with about thirty delegates and senators in our region.

## **VII. Adjournment**

Vice Chair Jenkot thanked all the Commissioners for their response to the HRC's support of the Education Equity Policy that was approved by the school board. Dr. Parrott thanked the Human Rights Commission for their support.

Liaison McKinnon reminded the Commissioners to complete their COVID-19 training by Friday, the 18<sup>th</sup>.

Commissioner Stanley reminded the Commission that the Pastors/Leaders Police Relations Roundtable is at 7pm.

Chair Nery-Strickland adjourned the meeting at 5:49pm

**Next Meeting:**  
Thursday, October 8, 2020 @ 4:00 p.m.  
Virtual Meeting