

*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 2, 2021, 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.*

April 8, 2021
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, Joe Burnsworth, Thomasine Cubine, Morgan Ellis, Jamal Gunn, Carla Hesseltine, Hannah Mancoll, Emiliano "Jojo" Orenca, Luis Rivera, Teresa Stanley, Mark Stevens, Ron Taylor, Frances Knight Thompson, Allison White, Rabbi Israel Zoberman

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

Liaisons Present: Rod Ingram (Deputy City Attorney), Captain Scott Wichtendahl

I. Call to Order/Roll Call

The meeting was called to order by Chairwoman Nery-Strickland at 4:04 p.m.

Roll Call of the Commissioners was taken. Commissioner Taylor connected to the meeting after Roll Call was taken. Commissioner Calliott was absent.

II. Minutes Approval

Commissioner Amberman made a motion to approve the minutes from the March 11th meeting. Commissioner Stanley seconded the motion. By a vote of 17-0, the minutes for the March 11th meeting were approved.

III. A Moment of Silence

Commissioner Zoberman led the Commission in a moment of silence in honor of Holocaust Remembrance Day.

IV. Resort Management Office and Ambassador Program Update

Brian Solis, Acting Resort Administrator, joined the meeting to give a presentation on the City's Resort Management Office and the Block by Block Ambassador Program.

He reported on the initiatives for the Resort Management Office that came from the RAC resolution that was approved unanimously by City Council in September. He stated that one initiative is to grow the maintenance and the coordination for how the resort area looks. With an extra layer of TLC, people will respect the public spaces on the Oceanfront more and the private sector will invest in their properties more to enhance the environment.

He reviewed the organizational chart for the Resort Management Office that includes Special Events and Programming, Code Enforcement, Homeless Outreach, and the Ambassador Program. The office will also coordinate with Public Works and Parks and Rec for maintenance, SGA for parking and Police, Fire and EMS for public safety.

He presented the overview of the Block by Block Ambassador Program and the services that they provide including supplemental cleaning, hospitality, and safety. The ambassadors will be outfitted with yellow shirts that will identify them. The program has 2 vehicles equipped with a power washing machine and other equipment that assist with their efforts as well as provide contact information for the Resort Management Office. The ambassadors will also engage with businesses to let them know about the services that they provide and there will be mobile kiosks along the Atlantic Avenue corridor to answer any questions people may have.

He reviewed the timeline for the execution of the program and to date, they have hired staff that has been deployed and the equipment ordered. The Resort Management Office is using the SMART system to develop performance measures and determine if they are meeting intended results. For the first week, the ambassadors were working in groups from 9:30am to 5:30pm and on April 6th, they went to individual full shifts. The heavy cleaning is done from 5am to 11am, ending when people start coming out of their hotels to enjoy the beach and the helpful ambassador services are then in place. As the crowd shifts from day-goers to night-goers, the ambassadors work to carry over that positive atmosphere. He reported that the program is still hiring and provided the contact information for anyone interested.

Commissioner Taylor asked what is the purpose of the ambassador program. Brian Solis explained that the purpose of the program is to maintain the appearance of the resort area, be of assistance to visitors and supplement services for homeless outreach. Commissioner Taylor asked if the program would help curb the amount of violence at the Oceanfront, as their services end at 11pm and that's when the criminal activities sometimes occur. Brian stated that the ambassadors are not law enforcement and have no authority to prevent criminal activity. He added that if the ambassador program shows that it is having a positive effect on the activity at the Oceanfront from 10pm to 11pm on the weekends, they could extend their services beyond 11pm.

Commissioner Stevens asked about the program's interaction with the homeless and the outreach workers at the Oceanfront. Brian explained that the ambassadors would be a friendly first point of contact with the homeless community and liaison to the outreach workers in the Resort Management Office. He reported that their training is in line with the training of the outreach specialist from the Housing and Neighborhood Preservation department. If the ambassadors witness any inappropriate, non-criminal activities, they will radio the office to contact the outreach workers and if they witness any criminal activities, they will also radio the office or liaison with the police if it is egregious. Commissioner Stevens asked what the full-time schedule will be for the homeless outreach workers at the Resort Management Office. Brian reported on the normal and non-traditional hours for the outreach workers.

Commissioner Amberman asked what the Resort Management Office will report out to the community about the improvements the program makes at the Oceanfront. Brian stated that by the end of the first quarter they should be able to determine what kind of impact they have had from before and after pictures, interviews with people and the metrics from the SMART system. Commissioner Amberman asked about the composition of the workforce and if it represents the diversity of the community. Brian stated that the workforce for the ambassador program is contracted and has labor laws that they have to abide by, and he has observed a diverse workforce. He does not

have the statistics on the diversity of the workforce. It is his goal for the workforce to reflect the diversity of the community. Commissioner Amberman also asked what the process is for the Resort Management Office communicating with the police when intervention is needed. Brian reported that there is a protocol of a direct line between Kelly Thornton, the Resort Ambassador Operations Manager, or the supervisors to both the non-emergency police number and the 2nd precinct emergency police number.

Chair Nery-Strickland reported on the email that was sent regarding the proposed wristbands for the HRC and the plan to give some of them to the Resort Management Office to be handed out to people by the ambassadors at the Oceanfront.

V. College Beach Week Plans

Captain Wichtendahl reported that there are two possible weekends for college beach weekend – at the end of April and another in May. The department is preparing for this with upstaffing and monitoring hotel reservations. He would like to recommend that the Commission prepare for observation for both weekends in April and May. Chair Nery-Strickland reported that there is an Independent Observer Program meeting next week.

Captain Wichtendahl added that his schedule and Captain Zelms' department assignment has changed. The Chief of Police asked Deputy Chief Dean to serve as the VBPD liaison to the HRC and he accepted. He had a prior engagement, but will be present for future meetings. Captain Wichtendahl still will be involved with the IOP.

VI. Chairman's/Committee/Liaison Reports

Chair Nery-Strickland asked if anyone had any objections to the wristband initiative. Commissioner Hesseltine stated that she agrees with the initiative with the "Stronger, Together" messaging. Commissioner Stanley asked if the wristbands would also lift the existence of the HRC. Chair Nery-Strickland stated that, that is part of the initiative and one side of the wristband will have the HRC printed. Commissioner Amberman supported the messaging of "Stronger, Together" as well.

Chair Nery-Strickland asked that commissioners remember to report their volunteer hours and asked Deputy City Attorney Rod Ingram if desk work and liaison work count towards those hours. Deputy City Attorney Ingram stated that if the work commissioners are doing is for the HRC, then it counts towards HRC volunteer hours.

Chair Nery-Strickland amended the agenda to move up the liaison report for the Pastors/Leaders Police Relations Table. Commissioner Stanley reported that Dr. Coleman, the facilitator of Pastor/Leaders Police Relations Table, has requested support from the HRC. Commissioner Stanley put forth a motion for the HRC to write a letter to encourage city leadership to bring community stakeholders together to create the best IRP/CRB process for Virginia Beach. Commissioner Amberman seconded the motion. By a vote of 18-0, the motion was approved.

Staff Liaison McKinnon reported on the Awards Committee meeting. She had a meeting with Valerie Myers, with the Communications Office, to go over the program outline that was in the minutes from the last committee meeting. She stated that Valerie is working to get a schedule from the video team and will contact the City photographer for options on backdrops for the shoot. Once the video team has provided their schedule and the honorees selected, then the schedule for recording segments of the program can be arranged starting in June. Commissioner Burnsworth added that he will be working on creating an opening slideshow for the program. He asked the commissioners to send him

any candid photos that they have from events that they have participated to be included in the slideshow. Staff Liaison reported that the nominees will be selected at the next Awards Committee meeting.

Vice Chair Jenkot asked the Commission for feedback on her reporting of the COVID-19 cases. Commissioner Amberman stated that it is a good way to measure the services provided to certain communities and suggested including the vaccination rates. Commissioner Amberman reported on the latest COVID-19 data from the Virginia Department of Health. She reported that FEMA is now in the area to provide vaccinations and give people the opportunity to register for vaccinations on-site. Her organization and others will be having a conversation with the Governor, putting forth recommendations such as allowing Latino religious communities to host vaccination sites to increase the amount of people vaccinated in the Latino community. Commissioner Stevens asked if there was a way to report out on where people can get vaccinations as he doesn't know how to refer people who need them. Commissioner Amberman said it is very difficult to find out in advance when vaccination events happen. Commissioner Anderson reported that Councilman Rouse is working with Hampton Roads Transit for free transportation to vaccination sites.

Commissioner Orenca reported that he has received four nominations and will be working with Staff Liaison McKinnon to schedule the Nominating Committee meeting. He reminded the Commission that if anyone wants to serve on the committee, he can be contacted.

Commissioner Taylor reported that at 6:30pm the Hampton Roads Black Caucus will be holding community forum on 21st Century policing with Chief Neudigate of the VBPD and Chief Boone of the Norfolk Police Department. He said that they will be discussing how to build trust between the community and the police department.

Commissioner Stanley reported that the Season for Non-Violence Collective has decided to make mental health their focus and is working with the Mental Health Taskforce, the ViBe district and NAMI. She stated that they are working on a rock painting project to help normalize mental health conversations. She invited commissioners to come to any of the events that were shared with the Commission.

Chair Nery-Strickland reported that she will be sending out information on a virtual forum for mental health that the Council of United Filipino Organization is hosting on April 13th.

Commissioner Anderson suggested placing information for housing resources in locations where the homeless sleep, such as underpasses.

VI. Citizens Remarks

Evan Nied spoke to the Commission about gender discrimination against women and teen boys in the Neptune Festival's royal court. He reported that he was able to get them to overturn their decision and now women and high school boys will be able to participate in the royal court for the Neptune Festival.

Tracie Ligid thanked the Commission for the FaceBook post about anti-Asian hate crimes. She asked if the HRC has received any reports about anti-Asian hate crimes and Staff Liaison McKinnon reported that she has not received any complaints to the office. Ms. Ligid stated that she joined the walk at the Oceanfront on Monday and Chair Nery-Strickland asked if she could report on what she observed. She said that she felt that it was a very positive experience. Chair Nery-Strickland stated that she has added Ms. Ligid as a citizen volunteer for the Independent Observer Program.

VII. Adjournment

Chair Nery-Strickland adjourned the meeting at 6:03pm.

Next Meeting:
Thursday, May 13, 2021 @ 4:00 p.m.
Virtual Meeting