



VIRGINIA BEACH HUMAN  
RIGHTS COMMISSION

# ANNUAL REPORT FY 2018



VIRGINIA BEACH HUMAN  
RIGHTS COMMISSION

# ANNUAL REPORT FY 2018

 <https://tinyurl.com/VBHRC>

 <https://www.facebook.com/HRC4VB/>

 [hrc@vbgov.com](mailto:hrc@vbgov.com)

 757.385.1158



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from the Chairperson	3
Executive Summary	4
LGBT Liasons	5
Homelessness Awareness Week	6
Letters to City Council	7
Other Letters and Articles	8
24th Annual Human Rights Awards Ceremony	9 - 10
The Art of Humanity	11
VAHR Conference	12
College Beach Weekend	13
Monthly Meetings / Presentations	14-16
Legislative Agenda Items	17
Community Engagement	18-19
Human Rights Inquiries	20
Membership History / VBHRC Volunteer Hours	21
Human Rights Commission Members and Staff Support	22

# Executive Summary

---



The Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission (VBHRC) serves as an advisory agency to the Virginia Beach City Council.

The mission of the VBHRC is to institute, conduct and engage in educational and informational programs for the promotion of mutual understanding and respect among all citizens and the fulfillment of human rights.

The Commission's objectives are to serve as a forum for discussion of human rights issues, to conduct studies and to propose solutions for the improvement of human relations in the City.

The VBHRC also provides 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.

The VBHRC achieves its mission, to serve our City's diverse community, by remaining connected, committed and collaborative.

The Fiscal Year 2018 Annual Report for the Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission serves as testament to the continued commitment of all members of the VBHRC and staff to achieve excellence in promoting and advocating for human rights.

8  
018  
FY2018



# LGBT LIAISONS



In August of 2017, Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission (VBHRC) in partnership with Hampton Roads Pride visited the Virginia Beach Sheriff's Office to meet and congratulate their new LGBT Liaison, Cpl. Guy Saucier. Support of the creation of LGBT Liaisons throughout our City is of an ongoing effort to promote equity and inclusion in the workplace and in our community



Through the efforts of VBHRC and Hampton Roads Pride, an association of Public Safety professionals and LGBT Liaisons representing regional Police, Fire, and EMS agencies, known as the Hampton Roads LGBT Public Safety Consortium was formed. This partnership promotes trust, respect, and understanding in order to foster safe and equitable cities and better serve our community.



# HOMELESSNESS AWARENESS WEEK

The Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission, Department of Housing and Neighborhood Preservation and the BEACH Community Partnership organized and sponsored the Give the Gift of Warmth Donation Drive (Nov. 17 – Dec. 8) to collect winter clothing for adults experiencing homelessness.



On Thursday, Dec. 21, the VBHRC, the Department of Housing and Neighborhood Preservation and the BEACH Community Partnership sponsored the City's Homeless Persons' memorial service and vigil. The event is held on the longest night of each year in observance of National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day in order to commemorate the lives of the men and women who have died homeless.

This was the last vigil at the Lighthouse Center before the Housing Resource Center opens in spring of 2018.

The ceremony included remarks by Councilmember Bob Dyer; Andrew Friedman, director of Housing and Neighborhood Preservation; and Raj Islam, chair of the Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission, who read a proclamation on behalf of Mayor Sessoms and the City Council declaring Dec. 21, 2017 as Virginia Beach Homeless Persons' Memorial Day. During the event, winter clothing donated by citizens were also provided to guests experiencing homelessness.



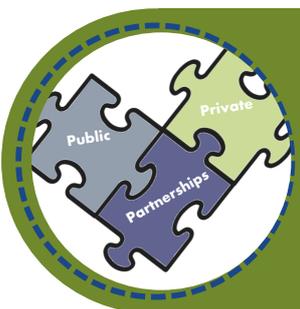
# LETTERS TO CITY COUNCIL

Letter to City Council and read at VBCPS Board meeting in support of the VBCPS School Board for their continuing efforts to foster a trusting, open, honest, equitable and inclusive learning environment for all students, by deciding to keep Bayside Sixth Grade Campus intact during the rebuilding of the Thoroughgood Elementary School facility.



Letter to City Council regarding the plight of the Puerto Rican people and requesting that Council continue to raise the ongoing humanitarian concerns with state and federal officials.

Letter to City Council in partnership with the Pastors and Community Leaders roundtable highlighting the professionalism and dedication of the VBPD and expressing gratitude for the acts of service they provide to our citizens and guests.



Letter to City Council requesting that the City evaluate the impact of including a “soft start” in the request for proposal that would extend entertainment opportunities to Fridays and Saturdays only starting from the second weekend in April until the Friday before Memorial Day.



# OTHER LETTERS AND ARTICLES

Letter to the members of the Charlottesville Human Rights Commission expressing solidarity and support for their organization in light of increased polarization in our state.



OP-ED to the Princess Anne independent News as part of the "US Project" highlighting what we can do to build inclusive communities amid a time of polarization.

Letter to Dannette Smith, Director of Human Services congratulating the department on their strategic plan and thanking them for their continuing collaboration with the VBHRC.





# 24<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL HUMAN RIGHTS AWARDS

On Thursday evening, April 5, 2018 more than 230 people gathered at the Virginia Beach Convention Center for the Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission 24th Annual Human Rights Awards Program to honor citizens whose efforts to promote cultural diversity, social awareness, equal opportunity, and exemplified our theme: *Diverse Community, One Humanity*.



This year's Human Rights Award honorees were:

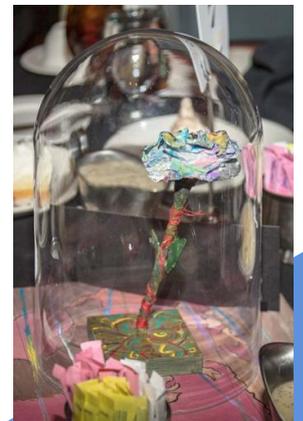
- Community Outreach Program VBUMC
- Hampton Roads Heroin Working Group
- I Need A Lighthouse
- Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art For the 14th
- Kenick El
- Bobby Melatti
- Barbara Unkle

The Daniel M. Stone Humanitarian Award was given to the Todd Walker; the Meyera E. Oberndorf Human Rights Achievement in Government Award recipient was Marie Culver and Helen P. Shropshire Human Rights Youth Award was presented to Roark Corson.



# 24<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL HUMAN RIGHTS AWARDS

The centerpieces were works of art created by students from all over Virginia Beach. Some by students from the Visual Arts program at Green Run Collegiate (GRC) and some from the Teen Advisory Group (TAG) a partnership between the Oceanfront and Great Neck Libraries



The ambiance was greatly uplifted by the gorgeous piano performance of Dr. Nancy Whitfield Television and radio personality, Becky Livas, served as the master of ceremonies and Sergeant Shelly Meister, supervisor of the VBPD's Special Victims Unit and VBPD's LGBT Liaison was the Keynote Speaker.





# THE ART OF HUMANITY

On Saturday, April 14 the ViBe Creative District and the Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission joined with City and local partners to host the first **Art of Humanity: In Honor of the Season for Nonviolence** event. The event opened with the reading of a resolution from the Virginia Beach City Council to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and to herald the Season for Nonviolence.



The Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission, ViBe Creative District and numerous local community partners hosted the Art of Humanity; which featured live music by the BJ Griffin Duo, a public mural painting with a local artist and Norfolk State Art Student, Walt Hardy, Origami Peace Crane making with the Virginia Beach Japanese Honor Society, face-painting and a bounce house for hands-on activities as well as vendors that provided an opportunity to celebrate how our inclusive communities are realizing Dr. King's vision of nonviolence today.



# VAHR CONFERENCE

Human Rights Commissioners, political leaders and citizens from across Virginia attended the Virginia Association for Human Rights (VAHR) Annual Meeting and Conference June 1-2, 2018, at the Wyndham Virginia Beach Oceanfront Hotel.

Commissioner Teresa Stanley briefed the group on efforts made by the VBHRC in partnership with other community members towards Medicaid expansion and celebrated the recent outcome of full expansion in Virginia.

The Conference also provided opportunities to discuss: D.A.C.A. in Virginia Fair Housing, voting rights in Virginia and other legislative items that have human rights implications and a panel of high school and college students: Youth Voices Rising that will focus on issues of importance to youth, advocacy methods and our youth's evolving role for community engagement.

The purpose of the conference is to provide a medium for the exchange of ideas and information among the various statutory commissions, councils and agencies and to strengthen our state and local commitment to the recognition and preservation of human rights.

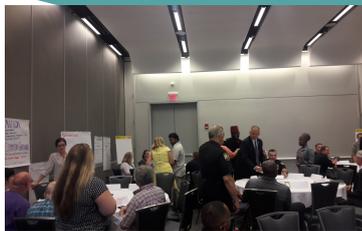




# COLLEGE BEACH WEEKEND



Two public forums were held prior to College Beach Weekend to provide information and a debrief meeting was held after for observers to provide feedback to City Leadership.



The VBHRC has maintained a constant presence at the oceanfront during what has traditionally been known as “College Beach Weekend” or “Week 17”. This year, the VBHRC decided to broaden their traditional College Beach Weekend observation program and ask for community members to join Commissioners as observers and invite them to provide insight, based upon their observations, on issues such as: capacity, perception, safety, traffic and parking. On Friday, April 27 and Saturday, April 28 the Commission hosted 56 individuals who filled 84 two hour observation time slots. The VBHRC City Council Liaisons, Shannon Kane and Bob Dyer hosted a follow up meeting with observers, facilitated by the STiR office, in order to capture their feedback for future planning.

The Community Observer Program was a successful collaboration with the VBPD, the VBHRC and resulted in 56 individuals participating throughout the entire weekend.

Virginia Beach  
Human Rights Commission

**WE NEED YOU**

COLLEGE BEACH WEEKEND  
COMMUNITY ALLIANCE PARTNERSHIP

**ACT** Inspire  
Connect

**ACKNOWLEDGE**

**EMPOWER**

**Lead** Engage  
Nurture

**SIGN UP** Walk the Virginia Beach Oceanfront and help to identify areas of concern

**SHARE** Complete the online survey and share your experience





# MONTHLY MEETINGS

VBHRC conducts monthly meetings to discuss human rights issues facing the community, to provide updates on the VBHRC's initiatives and to hear from citizens and organizations in the Community regarding their concerns or efforts toward advancing human rights. The Commission strives to remain accessible to the community by holding their meetings in various public locations throughout the City, including the Municipal Center, the Meyera E. Oberndorf Central Library and the Convention Center. VBHRC meetings are held on the second Thursday of every month at 4 p.m.





# MONTHLY MEETINGS

## September 14, 2017 - Municipal Center, Bldg. 19



Courtney Boone presented the Commission with an overview of NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) and the programs they offer. NAMI Virginia Beach advocates at the local, state, and national levels to eradicate the stigma associated with mental illness and they are committed to improving the lives of the community at large through free educational programs and community-wide inclusion.

## October 12, 2017 - Human Services Offices



Director of Human Services Department (HSD), Dannette Smith, and her staff provided a brief overview of expansions to existing as well as new programs due to increased state-funding including: REVIVE!, Forensic Service Expansion, and Adult Outpatient Services Redesign.

## November 9, 2017 - Meyera E. Oberndorf Central Library



Tidewater Arts Outreach

Mary Ann Toboz spoke with the Commission about the Mission of Tidewater Arts Outreach- to share the joy and healing power of quality arts experiences with people who have limited access to the arts due to health, economic or social circumstances.

## December 14, 2017 - Municipal Center, Bldg. 19



Dr. LaQuiche Parrott, Virginia Beach City Public Schools Director of Opportunity & Achievement, provided the Commissioners with an update on the progress of the Student Discipline Task Force



Deputy Chief Zucaro provided a presentation entitled "Large Scale Event Planning Safety and Security", which provided an overview of the planning process and security coverage during any large scale event.



# MONTHLY MEETINGS

## March 8, 2018 - Meyera E. Oberndorf Central Library



Dr. LaQuiche Parrott, Virginia Beach City Public Schools Director of Opportunity & Achievement, Mary Dees, coordinator of student conduct and Robert Jamison, the coordinator for school counselors, provided an overview of VBCPS bullying and student conduct programs and initiatives.



Deputy Chief Zucaro shared a presentation regarding the role of police officers in school safety. He detailed the changes that have been made since tragedies like Columbine in 1999: such as Police and school initiatives like School Resource Officers, as well as a holistic approach that includes working with VBCPS and organizations such as Safe Schools.

## April 12, 2018 - Virginia Beach Convention Center



Deputy Chief Zucaro provided an overview of the City's prospective regarding Week 17, and went through the plan for the two public forums that will be held at the Virginia Beach Convention Center. The forums will cover preparations for beach weekend and provide breakout sessions for community members to share their concerns.

## May 10, 2018 - Meyera E. Oberndorf Central Library



Deputy Chief Zucaro provided a presentation entitled reflections on College Beach Weekend which included data collected by the VBPD regarding arrests and charges. Lt. Zelms highlighted the tremendous outpouring of support from the community observers. Kathy Hinson shared an overview of the data that was gathered from the Independent observers.





# LEGISLATIVE AGENDA ITEMS

The VBHRC submitted six (6) legislative agenda items to the City Council for consideration in their legislative agenda:

- Expansion of the Virginia Human Rights Act to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity
- Support increased funding for mental healthcare and housing
- Support increased funding for opioid prevention, treatment and recovery
- Support full expansion of Medicaid as provided by the Affordable Care Act
- Support legislation that would remove barriers to voter participation, enact nonpartisan redistricting reform, and improve the ability of all Virginia citizens to exercise their fundamental right to vote.
- Support legislation that would enable undocumented immigrants who reside in Virginia and meet certain qualifications to apply for temporary or limited duration driver's licenses, which would be clearly distinguishable from regular licenses and would include bold text indicating that they are not valid for any use other than driving.



Initially, Expansion of Medicaid was omitted, however City Council reconsidered this omission and included the item in its entirety.

City Council approved the inclusion of four (4) items in their adopted legislative agenda as suggested by the VBHRC with some edits. Council included the expansion of the Virginia Human Rights Act to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and added to explicitly prohibit racial profiling. The recommendation for mental healthcare was kept, but housing was removed and opioid funding included in its place. The recommendation regarding drivers licenses for undocumented immigrants was not approved by Council for inclusion into the legislative agenda.



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



CREATING A MORE CIVIL SOCIETY: IS M.L.K.'S LEGACY JUST A DREAM? TOWN HALL DISCUSSION

**RACE**  
Let's Talk About It

Saturday, March 3, 2018  
2:30 - 4:00 PM  
Boyd Dining Center  
Virginia Wesleyan University

Moderated by  
Barbara Hamm Lee  
Host of *Let's Talk About It*  
WVU 93.7 FM

Sponsored by  
Wesleyan Center  
Center for the Study of Religion, President of WVU  
City of Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission

Register: [www.org/16464646](http://www.org/16464646)



**BEYOND the BLOCK**  
October to November 2017

An Art Exhibition created by  
Community and the University of Virginia  
Chrysler Museum of Art



HIGHEST HEAVENS

Spanish and Portuguese Colonial Art from the  
Collection of Roberta and Richard Huber





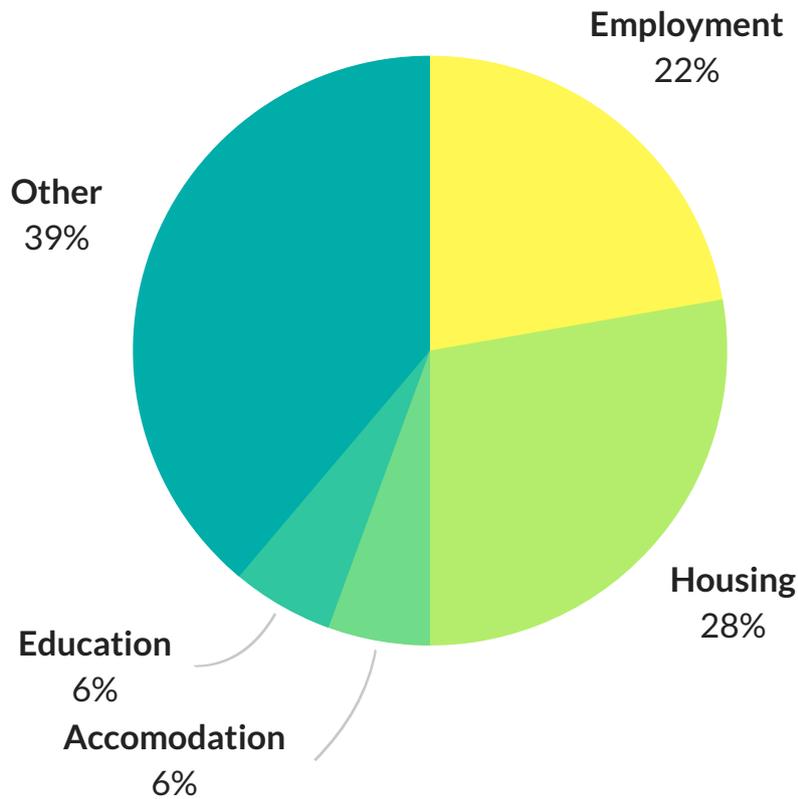
# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT





# HUMAN RIGHTS INQUIRIES

One of the objectives of the VBHRC is to provide assistance to persons who believe their rights have been violated. The Commission accomplishes this by identifying the appropriate federal, state or local agency that can address the complaint and by referring the person to the appropriate agency. Below is a breakdown of the 18 inquiries the VBHRC received in the last fiscal year:



## Federal Agency Referrals

- EEOC
- Immigrant Defense Project
- HUD
- National Association of the Deaf
- NAMI

## State Agency Referrals

- Oxford House regional Coordinator
- Disability Law Center
- Virginia Indigent Defense Commission
- VA Latino Advisory Board
- Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- Virginia Employment Commission

## Local Agency Referrals

- Legal Aid Society of Eastern Virginia
- VBPD
- Private Attorney
- Human Resources
- Hampton Roads Pride
- VBHRC Commissioners
- Commonwealth's Attorney-Chesapeake
- VBCPS Superintendent and leadership
- Director of Housing
- Riverside Center for Excellence in Aging
- VB Senior Resource Center
- Alzheimer's Association of Hampton Roads



# MEMBERSHIP HISTORY

During this fiscal year, City Council appointed:

- Beatriz Amberman (3rd Consecutive Term)
- Pakti Barot (1st Consecutive Term)
- Michael Berlucchi (2nd Consecutive Term)
- Nicholas DiNonna (1st Term - Student Commissioner)
- Dr. Virginia "Ginger" Jenkot (1st Consecutive Term)
- Sylvia Nery-Strickland (2nd Consecutive Term)



Swearing in Rajeeb Islam as Chair and Sylvia Nery -Strickland as Vice-Chair



# VOLUNTEER HOURS

Commission members are appointed as volunteers by City Council to serve on the Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission. This fiscal year, members of the VBHRC volunteered for approximately **1,472 hours**, with an estimated savings of **\$35,534.08**, in an effort to fulfill their commitment to advocate for human rights in Virginia Beach



## Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission Members

---



Beatriz Amberman  
Pankti Barot  
Michael Berlucchi  
Vivian E. Blaize  
Thomasine "Tommie" Cubine  
Nicholas DiNonno, Student Commissioner  
Joseph Hyatt, Student Commissioner  
Rajeeb Islam, Chairman  
Dr. Virginia (Ginger) Jenkot  
Mary Mathena  
Sylvia Nery-Strickland  
Fortunanto "JoJo" Orencia Jr.  
Jim Parke  
William "Cliff" Rice  
Luis Rivera  
Teresa Stanley  
Ronald Taylor, Vice Chairman  
Frances Knight Thompson  
Rabbi Israel Zoberman

---

### City Council Liaisons

Councilmember Bob Dyer  
Councilmember Shannon D.S. Kane

---

### VBHRC Staff Support

Kenneth Chandler - Deputy City Manager  
Regina Hilliard - Director of Human Resources  
Melissa Bowers - Manager, Employee Relations  
Kathy Hinson - VBHRC Staff Liaison  
Jerlisa Winborne - Administrative Assistant, Human Resources

---

### Legal Counsel

Rod Ingram - Deputy City Attorney

---

### Departmental Liaisons

Deputy Chief Tony Zucaro - Virginia Beach Police Department  
Lieutenant Lois Thompson - Virginia Beach Sheriff's Office  
LaQuiche R. Parrott, Virginia Beach City Public Schools

8  
18  
018  
2018  
EY2018