ANNUAL REPORT TO CITY COUNCIL

FISCAL YEAR 2016

Prepared by the Department of Human Resources
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letter from the Chairman</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Summary</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homelessness Awareness Week</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interfaith Dialogue</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolutions and Proclamations</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters to City Council</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Retreat</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22nd Annual Human Rights Award Ceremony</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAHR Conference</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Action</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ancillary Duties</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beach Weekend</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly Meetings</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentations</td>
<td>15-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative Agenda Submitted</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizen Advisory Committee</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Events</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Committees</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRC Volunteer Hours</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Rights Inquiries</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership History</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Rights Commission Members and Staff Support</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
July 5, 2016

The Honorable William D. Sessoms, Jr., Mayor
Members of City Council


Dear Mayor Sessoms & City Council Members:

On behalf of the Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission (HRC), I am proud to present the Commission’s Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2016.

This report highlights the accomplishments and initiatives brought forth by the HRC; such as the Refugee Resolution, letters of support for Light Rail expansion and the additions of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity to Virginia Beach School’s existing policies, as well as promoting the Standing Together initiative.

The HRC continues to fulfill our mission to educate citizens, address human rights related issues, and ensure more efforts are made to focus on citizens’ concerns in order to protect their rights and create a more inclusive community. This fiscal year, members of the HRC have volunteered approximately 884 hours, with an estimated savings of $20,827.04, in an effort to fulfill their commitment to advocate for Human Rights in Virginia Beach.

As the HRC prepares to enter another fiscal year, we continue to champion change, observe progress, celebrate successes, and actively address challenges.

As always, I appreciate your continued support. It is a privilege and honor to lead this Commission.

Respectfully submitted,

William “Cliff” Rice, Chairman
Human Rights Commission
Executive Summary

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

The mission of the HRC 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 HRC 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.

To achieve this mission, the HRC remains connected and engaged with citizens of diverse ages, disabilities, ethnicities, genders, races, religious affiliations and sexual orientations to better understand their needs and concerns.

The Fiscal Year 2016 Human Rights Commission’s Annual Report is a testimony to the commitment of all members of the HRC and staff to achieve excellence in promoting and advocating for human rights. The HRC envisions the creation of a diverse, inclusive community, where all people can live, work and visit “the greatest City in the world.”
Homelessness Awareness Week

The HRC and Volunteers of America, in partnership with Housing and Neighborhood Preservation, hosted the National Homelessness Memorial Day Candle Light Vigil on Monday, December 21st at 7:00 p.m. at the Lighthouse Center.

As the first day of winter and the longest day of the year, Homelessness Memorial Day is a time to remember those who struggled with homelessness and died in Virginia Beach.

The HRC organized contributions of new or used lightweight washable blankets, socks and powdered detergents that were donated to the Lighthouse Center for distribution to people struggling with homelessness. Donations were received from individuals and organizations from all over the community, including Princess Anne High school students who sponsored a Winter Coat and Blanket Drive.

Mayor William D. Sessoms Jr. joined the staff of the Lighthouse Center (operated by Volunteers of America), the HRC and the Department of Housing and Neighborhood Preservation to commemorate this special day.
Interfaith Dialogue

Standing Together

“Standing Together” was an initiative launched, in December 2015, by the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities in response to increasing Islamophobia, xenophobia, and divisive rhetoric. The goal was to bring diverse groups in Hampton Roads and Richmond together to speak out and stand with the Muslim community and others who felt marginalized.

On January 4, 2016, a full-page advertisement was placed in The Virginian-Pilot titled “We Stand Together,” followed by the names of over 140 religious leaders, houses of worship and institutions that committed their support, including members of the Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission. The Standing Together Hampton Roads Community Event was held on January 24, 2016 at the Slover Library in Norfolk. The HRC continues to be an active advocate and partner in promoting inclusive and educational dialogue with people of all faiths.

The Sultan and the Saint

The group, St. Francis and the Sultan, born out of an HRC Community Conversation several years ago, is now called The Sultan and the Saint in an effort to be more inclusive. The group continues to meet on a regular basis, alternating meeting locations between the Crescent Community Center and the Church of the Holy Apostles. In 2015, the group hosted the Iftar dinners, another effort to promote religious education and understanding. These dinners were done in conjunction with congregation visits by Imam Rachid Khound and other members of The Sultan and the Saint.
Resolutions and Proclamations

Refugee Resolution

Commissioner Rabbi Israel Zoberman read the Refugee Resolution adopted by the HRC during their monthly meeting on November 12, 2015. The resolution acknowledges all refugees and displaced people worldwide, and calls for government agencies of all levels to create a welcoming environment by treating all who seek asylum with dignity and respect.

ADA Proclamation

During the HRC’s Monthly meeting on September 10, 2015, Mayor Sessoms read a proclamation in honor of the 25th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. This reaffirmed the City of Virginia Beach’s commitment to upholding the inalienable rights of all persons to fully participate in all areas of society; free from discrimination or prejudice.
Letters to City Council

- Letter to City Council endorsing the *Let’s Open Doors* program and requesting that the Mayor issue a proclamation in support of the 25th Anniversary of Americans with Disabilities Act.

- Letter to City Council in support of the School Board adding *sexual orientation* and *gender identity* as protected classes to their existing policy.

- Letter to City Council in support of Light Rail Expansion in Virginia Beach based on the following Human Rights implications:
  - Light Rail will serve seniors who wish to remain in their own communities rather than in segregated facilities.
  - Light Rail is vital to people with low incomes or people of color, who own fewer cars and tend to live further away from living-wage jobs.
  - Light Rail would improve mobility for people with disabilities, many of whom are not able to drive.
  - Light Rail would provide personal mobility and freedom, for people from every walk of life, by improving citizens’ access to education, employment, housing and healthcare.

- Letter to City Council in support of the implementation of partial expansion of full-day kindergarten programs.
The HRC held it’s annual retreat on February 19, 2016 at the Office of Economic Development. The eight hour retreat was an intensive planning session to develop the HRC’s Work Plan for the next three years. Patricia Greer, Human Resources Learning and Development Manager, acted as facilitator. She began with a thought-provoking team building exercise focused on understanding and appreciating differences in one another. The goal was to maximize the strengths of each Commissioner, to build rapport and to increase listening skills in order for the HRC to continue being a strong and effective advocate for Human Rights.
On Thursday evening, March 31, the Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission held its 22nd Annual Human Rights Award Ceremony at the Virginia Beach Convention Center. Mayor William D. Sessoms, Jr. provided remarks to members of the community who support the HRC and its mission, and retired Deputy City Manager Cindy Curtis served as the keynote speaker. Jonathan Zur, from the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities, who was the emcee, provided a brief overview of each honoree, while HRC Chairman Cliff Rice, Mayor Sessoms, and Council Members Shannon Kane and Bob Dyer presented the awards. The Human Rights Award recipients were: Bonnie Beni, Jobynia Caldwell, Emily Reaves and Jerry and Amy Frostick. The Daniel M. Stone Humanitarian Award went to Janet and George Moore. The Affordable Care Act Marketplace Enrollment Team, Dr. Heidi Kulberg, Pat Davidson, Ellen Burgess, Virginia Beach Medical Reserve Corps and their community partners received the Meyera E. Oberndorf Human Rights Award for Achievement in Government.

Human Rights Award recipients, Jerry and Amy Frostick, could not attend the Ceremony on March 31. Commissioner Vivian Blaize and Mayor Sessoms presented the Frosticks with their award at the Shamrock Marathon VIP Dinner on March 17, 2016.
The HRC hosted the Virginia Association for Human Rights (VAHR) Annual Meeting and Conference on June 3-4, 2016, at the Wyndham Virginia Beach Oceanfront Hotel. The conference was attended by 27 Commissioners from across the state of Virginia. There were three plenary sessions. The first was presented by Captain Todd Jones from the Virginia Beach Police Department regarding body worn cameras. The second session was presented by Imam Rasheed Khould entitled *The True Islam: Muslim Integrity*. The third session opened a discussion about Civil War Monuments and War Memorials, led by the historical society representatives and a panel which included Curtis Porter, President of VAHR; Jean Kelleher, Director, Office of Human Rights at City of Alexandria and Charlene Green, manager of the Office of Human Rights for Charlottesville.

The purpose of the VAHR is to provide a medium for the exchange of ideas and information among the various statutory commissions, councils and agencies. The VAHR’s goals are to:

- Work to inform the general public and public policy-makers about issues of concern in the field of human rights.
- Encourage and assist in the creation of statutory human rights commissions in jurisdictions where such bodies do not exist.
- Seek to strengthen the state and local commitment to the recognition and preservation of human rights.
Community Action

At the March 10, 2016, meeting the Human Rights Commission suggested that the Virginia Beach Police Department consider creating an LGBT Liaison position for the VBPD.

On May 11, 2016, the VBPD announced the appointment of Sergeant Michele “Shelly” Meister as the first VBPD LGBT Liaison.

On February 1, 2016 Chairman Cliff Rice spoke at the monthly Hampton Roads Pride membership meeting about the Human Rights Commission’s continuing efforts to advocate for and advance human rights and cultural diversity, especially those efforts related to the LGBT community.

On May 2, 2016, the NPR program, HearSay with Cathy Lewis, covered the death of LGBT activist, and uncle to HRC Commissioner Rajeeb Islam, Xulhaz Mannan. HRC Chairman Cliff Rice, and Commissioner Michael Berlucchi joined Commissioner Islam to discuss the tragic loss of Mannan, and the correlation to LGBT issues in the US and locally.
Ancillary Duties

HRC Commissioners toured the Mental Health Services at the Virginia Beach Jail to do a “walk through review” of the services and atmosphere. Each Commissioner observed and provided a verbal report to the Commission after their visit, addressing: interaction of correctional officers with the inmates, living conditions, rehabilitation activities and programs, as well as any possible signs of discrimination towards the inmate population.

Members of the HRC also visited the Oceanfront during Fourth of July, Labor Day, Memorial Day and non-holidays to monitor services offered by the City. Their role was to observe and assess the atmosphere with regard to: providing a safe and friendly environment, public service interaction with citizens and to bring attention to any signs of discrimination. The Commissioners also provided a verbal report to the Commission after each observance.

Beach Weekend

In years past, the HRC, at the request of the Virginia Beach Police Department (VBPD), has served as both welcoming ambassador and observer during what has traditionally been known as “College Beach Weekend” or “Week 17.” The VBPD inquired if the HRC would be willing to observe the College Beach Weekend activities again this year. The HRC welcomed the observation request and solicited community groups and citizens to participate in this civic engagement opportunity. Five diverse observer teams, including seven (7) citizens and five (5) HRC members, served as welcoming ambassadors and observers for the 2016 College Beach Weekend from April 22-24. A written report of the findings made by the observers was submitted to the HRC City Council Liaisons, to be shared with City Council.
The HRC conducts monthly meetings to discuss human rights issues facing the community, to provide updates for ongoing projects of the commission, and to remain engaged and proactive in addressing the human rights needs of the citizens of Virginia Beach.

In an effort to keep themselves informed, the Commission routinely invites guest speakers to address them on various topics in the community.

The Commission strives to remain accessible to the community by holding their meetings in various public locations throughout the city, including the Municipal Center and the Meyera E. Oberndorf Central Library, or the Joint Use Library. The HRC meetings are held on the second Thursday of every month at 4 p.m.
Presentations

- **July 9, 2015 - Meyer E. Oberndorf Library**
  Aaron Sutch of the non-profit organization Virginia Sun, spoke to the commission about his company’s work to facilitate the process for Virginians to obtain local renewable solar energy.

- **August 13, 2015 - Meyer E. Oberndorf Library**
  Dr. Jackson provided the commission with an overview of the training and steps taken by the school system to become more inclusive and understanding of the LGBT community. Three trainings were developed for counselors to address the varying age groups in elementary, middle and high school.

- **September 10, 2015 - Meyer E. Oberndorf Library**
  Mayor Sessoms presented a proclamation commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act and reaffirming the City of Virginia Beach’s commitment to upholding the inalienable rights of all persons to participate fully in all areas of society, free from discrimination or prejudice.

- **October 8, 2015 - Municipal Center, Bldg. 19**
  Police Chief Cervera provided the Commission with an update on the officer involved shooting that took place on Friday, September 5, that resulted in the death of two African-American citizens.

- **November 12, 2015 - Municipal Center, Bldg. 19**
  Lt. Bob Christman of the VBPD provided the Commission with a presentation regarding the increased use of cameras at the Oceanfront The project was funded as a City Capital Improvement Plan and is being implemented in three phases. When phases one through three are completed, there will be a total of 85 Police Department cameras in and around the Oceanfront.

- **December 10, 2015 - Joint Use Library**
  Imam Rachid Khould from the Crescent Community Center spoke to the Commission about what is happening in the local, national and world arenas involving the Islamic community.
Presentations

- **January 14, 2016 - Meyer E. Oberndorf Library**
  Commissioner Cubine provided statistics on the percentage of individuals with mental health issues who are not receiving treatment, the percentage of individuals over 18 years of age, with mental health issues, and the number of inmates in the City who are affected.

- **February 11, 2016 - Meyer E. Oberndorf Library**
  Andrew Friedman, Director of Housing and Neighborhood Preservation, and Karen Prochilo, Project Manager with the Rehabilitation and Construction Division of Housing and Neighborhood Preservation, provided an informative overview of the new Housing Resource Center to be built at 104 N. Witchduck Road.

- **March 10, 2016 - Municipal Center, Bldg. 19**
  City Manager Dave Hansen provided a brief overview of Transportation/Tide expansion and the impact to Hampton Roads and our local economy.

  Police Chief Cervera provided a presentation summarizing the “use of force” by the Virginia Beach Police Department in 2015.

- **April 14, 2016 - Municipal Center, Bldg. 19**
  City Councilman Bob Dyer addressed the Commission and provided an in-depth explanation of his stance on the light rail initiative.

  Dannette Smith (Director of Human Services) and her staff, gave an overview of the Department that included its mission, budget, portfolio, staffing, the expectations from the City and community, and the organization charts of the Department and Community Services Board.

- **May 12, 2016 - Meyer E. Oberndorf Library**
  Curtis Porter, President of the Virginia Association on Human Rights (VAHR), provided a brief history of the VAHR, and spoke about their upcoming conference in June.

- **June 9, 2016 - Meyer E. Oberndorf Library**
  Sgt. Michele “Shelly” Meister, the LGBT Liaison for the Virginia Beach Police Department, provided an overview of the new LGBT Liaison role.
The HRC submitted four 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.
- Significant increases to funding for mental healthcare services and housing.
- Support the Medicaid expansion for all Virginians.
- Support legislation that would remove barriers to voter participation and improve the ability of all Virginia citizens to exercise their fundamental right to vote.

City Council approved the inclusion of all four items in their adopted legislative agenda.
Community Events

- “Out of the Darkness” Walk for Suicide Prevention at Mt. Trashmore
- Together We Can Foundation Awareness Breakfast Meetings
- Day of Peace - Union Church of Tidewater
- National Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration at Old Dominion University. The Key note speaker was Commissioner Beatrice Amberman
- Hampton Roads Diversity & Inclusion Consortium Conference
- 20th Annual Minority Business Council Conference & Expo
- Hampton Roads Pride Meetings
- FilFest - a Celebration of Filipino Heritage
- School to Prison Pipeline Family Meetings
- Hampton Roads Diversity & Inclusion Consortium Meetings
- Annual Human Rights Campaign Dinner
- Hampton Roads Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Scholarship and Awards Ceremony
- Asian Fest
- Legends Walk Ceremony
- Voting Rights Restoration Celebration & Information Session
- Governor’s Latino Advisory Board - Hampton Roads Community Forum & Reception
- Hampton Roads PrideFest 2016
City Committees

Commission members participate in various committees:

- Affordable Housing
- Virginia Beach Arena Citizens Communication Committee
- Bringing an End to All City Homelessness (BEACH)
- Minority Business Council
- Light Rail Committee
- Mayor's African American Roundtable
- MAPP Leadership Committee - Public Health Department
- Resort Advisory Commission
- Virginia Beach Council of Civic Organizations
- Sustainability Planning Committee
- VBPD Minority Policing Workgroup
- Virginia Beach City Public Schools Equity Council

HRC 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 Human Rights Commission have volunteered for approximately 884 hours, with an estimated savings of $20,827.04, in an effort to fulfill their commitment to advocate for Human Rights in Virginia Beach.
One of the objectives of the HRC 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 27 inquiries the HRC received in the last fiscal year:
**Membership History**

During this fiscal year, City Council appointed:

- **Regan Bracknell** (1st Term - Student Commissioner)
- **Gavin Moulton** (1st Term - Student Commissioner)
- **Tomasine “Tommie” Cubine** (Completing an Unexpired Term)
- **Mary Mathena** (1st Consecutive Term)
- **Vivian Blaize** (3rd Consecutive Term)
- **William C. Rice** (3rd Consecutive Term)
- **Luis Rivera MA Ed.** (2nd Consecutive Term)
- **Teresa Stanley** (2nd Consecutive Term)
- **Frances Knight Thompson** (1st Consecutive Term)
- **Rabbi Israel Zoberman** (2nd Consecutive Term)
- **Joseph Hyatt** (1st Term - Student Commissioner)

Commissioner Geraldine King-Hunt concluded her tenure with the Human Rights Commission in March of 2016, after six years of dedicated service.

At the June 9, 2016, meeting the HRC re-elected Cliff Rice as Chair and elected Rajeeb Islam as Second Vice-Chair. At the time of this report, the position of Vice-Chair was undetermined.
Human Rights Commission Members

Beatriz Amberman
Michael Berlucchi
Vivian E. Blaize, Vice-Chair
Reagan Bracknell
Thomasine “Tommie” Cubine
Rajeeb Islam
Duff Kliewer
Mary Mathena
Gavin Moulton
Jim Parke
William “Cliff” Rice, Chair
Luis Rivera
Teresa Stanley, 2nd Vice-Chair
Sylvia Nery-Strickland
Ronald Taylor
Frances Knight Thompson
Rabbi Israel Zoberman

City Council Liaisons
Councilmember Bob Dyer
Councilmember Shannon DS Kane

HRC Staff Support
Regina Hilliard - Director of Human Resources
Cindy Curtis - Deputy City Manager (now retired)
Melissa Bowers - Manager, Employee Relations
Kathy Hinson - Administrative Specialist, Human Resources
Howard Waldie IV - Administrative Assistant, Human Resources

Legal Counsel
Rod Ingram - Deputy City Attorney

Departmental Liaisons
Deputy Chief Patrick Gallagher - Virginia Beach Police Department
Sgt. Wayne Golden - Virginia Beach Sheriff’s Office
Sgt. Lois Thompson - Virginia Beach Sheriff’s Office