



# City of Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission Fact Sheet



**MISSION:** The Virginia Beach Human Rights Commission (HRC) exists to advocate for the human rights of residents in the City of Virginia Beach.

**MEMBERSHIP:** Nineteen (19) persons are appointed by City Council to serve on the Human Rights Commission. They represent a diverse cross-section of the community through differences in age, disability, ethnicity, gender, race, religious affiliations and sexual orientation. Commissioners serve as volunteers and do not receive stipends for attendance of meetings or events.

**MEETINGS:** The HRC meets monthly, on the second Thursday of each month. These meetings begin at 4:00 p.m. and are open to the public. Meetings are held in various locations throughout the city. Please refer to the schedule posted on the HRC website for locations.

**AUTHORIZATION:** The HRC will provide assistance persons who believe that his or her rights have been violated. The Commission **does not have legal authority** to act on any claim. The role of the Commission is to assist the individual by identifying the appropriate agency (at the local, state and/or national levels) that can address his/her claim.

**FUNDING:** The HRC is physically located in the Department of Human Resources, but maintains a separate budget code for funding programs and initiatives.

**PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:** HRC programs work toward mutual understanding, respect of all citizens and advocacy of human rights for all people. This includes conducting recognition and educational programs, discussion forums, acting as liaison to other community and governmental commissions or agencies, and referral assistance to citizens who feel their rights have been violated.

## **Educational Programs (past and present)**

- *HRC's Annual Human Rights Awards Program.* This recognition program gives members of the community an opportunity to nominate individuals, community groups, organizations, and/or businesses for meritorious service in the pursuit of cultural diversity and advocacy of human rights for all.
  - *Daniel M. Stone Humanitarian Award* –This award honors the efforts and or actions of a citizen who has excelled in their efforts related to humanitarianism. Given in memory of Daniel M. Stone, former Director of the Department of Human Services.
  - *Meyera E. Oberndorf Human Rights Award for Achievement in Government.* This award honors government officials or groups (elected or appointed) who protect or promote the awareness of cultural diversity and advocacy of human rights. Nominees must reside or work in the Commonwealth of Virginia and contribute to promoting human rights within the state. Given in memory of former Mayor Meyera E. Oberndorf.
  - *Helen P. Shropshire Human Rights Youth Award.* This award honors a middle or high school student (public, private or home school) who resides in Virginia Beach and contributes to the promotion of human rights benefitting the residents of the City of Virginia Beach. Given In memory of Helen P. Shropshire, a founding member of the HRC, a lifetime advocate and educator.



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## Community Outreach Efforts (past and present)

- Commission members act as community observers at the Virginia Beach Oceanfront during major spring and summer holidays.
- The Commission assists the Virginia Beach Police Department (VBPD) with community policing in targeted neighborhoods. The Commission serves as a liaison between the community and the VBPD, in order to assist in connecting citizens to city services and information.
- Commission members visit the City's correctional and juvenile facilities to do a tour and review of the services and atmosphere.
- Public Forums and task force meetings. The Commission gets the opportunity to engage with residents, governmental and non-profit agencies to discuss human rights concerns in the City and help to find inclusive, sustainable solutions to issues that are lifted.
- Commission members regularly attend City Council meetings and Citizens Advisory Committees throughout the City.

## Communication

- The HRC serves as a facilitator for discussions by hosting public forums and engaging in community dialogue that allow the citizens to share personal experiences and their human rights/relations concerns.
- The HRC holds monthly public meetings, which provide citizens, City representatives, community partners and other agencies the opportunity to not only express their concerns but also discuss possible solutions and create lasting partnerships between citizens, local government and private organizations.
- The Commission provides an annual report to City Council which highlights the work of the HRC done in the previous fiscal year and an update on ongoing HRC initiatives.
- The HRC maintains a City website and has a presence on social media, which provide information about the activities of the HRC.
- On an annual basis, the HRC submits items to City Council for consideration on the Legislative Agenda Packet for the General Assembly.



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## Commission Members

Sylvia Nery-Strickland, Chairperson  
Beatriz Amberman  
Cheryll Caalim, Student Member  
David Calliott  
Brother LaKendrick Coburn El  
Thomasine Cubine  
Nicholas DiNonno, Student Member  
Rajeeb Islam  
Dr. Virginia Jenkot  
E. Fortunato Orenca Jr.  
Luis A. Rivera  
Teresa Stanley  
Ronald Taylor  
Frances Knight Thompson  
Allison White  
Rabbi Israel Zoberman

## City Council Liaisons

Bob Dyer  
Michael F. Berlucchi

## Executive Director

Regina Hilliard, Director of Human Resources

## Legal Counsel

Roderick R. Ingram, Deputy City Attorney

## Staff Members

Mary Graessle, Employee Relations Manager  
Tracie Liguin, HRC Liaison  
Kelly Borger, Administrative Assistant

## Department Liaison Members

Deputy Chief Tony Zucaro, Police Department  
Lt. Lois Thompson, Sheriff's Office  
Sgt. Michele Meister, Police Department  
LaQuiche Parrott, Ed.D, VBCPS

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