



CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

DATE: August 3, 2016 CONSENT CALENDAR

SUBJECT: ACCEPTANCE OF THE PALM SPRINGS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2015-16

FROM: David H. Ready, City Manager

BY: Neighborhood and Community Relations Department

SUMMARY

The Palm Springs Human Rights Commission is presenting its 2015-16 annual report to the City Council, outlining its accomplishments and the topics it addressed.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Receive and file the Palm Springs Human Rights Commission's Annual Report for 2015-16

STAFF ANALYSIS:

One of the goals of the Palm Springs Human Rights Commission is to educate itself and the community on human rights issues. Each September, the Commission conducts a half-day planning session where it prioritizes its work plan for the next 10 months. In 2014-15, the Commission focused on ableism, affordable/fair housing, equal access in education/government, homelessness and race relations. The Commission conducted its education by inviting guest speakers to address specific topics at the monthly Commission meetings.

Throughout the year, the Commission has raised awareness by participating in several community events such as the Black History Month Parade, the Greater Palm Springs Pride Parade, the Veterans Day Parade and the Organized Neighborhoods of Palm Springs Picnic and Community Expo. The Commission also sponsored a table and attended the Harvey Milk Diversity Breakfast.

One of the Commission's most popular events is its presentation of Community Service Awards to local individuals and organizations, publicly recognizing their efforts to promote universal human rights "close to home."

ITEM NO. 16

The Commission believes it also has served the community and the City Council by:


- Participating on the Police Department's LGBT Outreach Committee
- Participating in the Homelessness Task Force Committee and Riverside County's 2016 Homeless Point-in-Time Count
- Participating in the Community Development Block Grant Citizens' Advisory Committee
- Participating in the Ethics, Transparency and Government Reform Task Force
- Playing a part in Palm Springs receiving a perfect score on the Human Rights Campaign's Municipal Equality Index Scorecard
- Providing free mediation services -- a voluntary process that brings parties together to resolve their differences through discussion and problem-solving

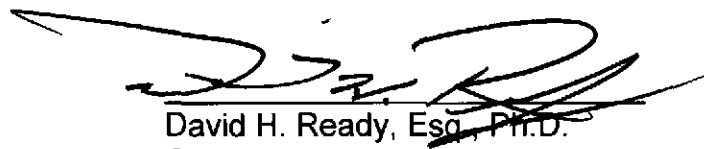
This year the Commission looked to reintroduce itself with a new logo that reflects the organization's inclusiveness, its broad scope of topics and its mission. Commissioners selected a design with a palm tree which is synonymous with Palm Springs. The circle around the tree denotes inclusiveness with a design that has a yin yang balance, and an equal sign on the trunk which stands for equality and justice. The swimming pool blue colors are reflective of trust and peace.



FISCAL IMPACT:

None.


Lee A. Bonno, Director of
Neighborhoods & Community Relations


David H. Ready, Esq., Ph.D.
City Manager

Attachments:

Palm Springs Human Rights Commission Annual Report 2015-16

Palm Springs Human Rights Commission Review of Year 2015 – 16 Annual Report

Commissioners: Dee Dee Wilson Barton, Chair; Jack Newby, Vice Chair;
Eduardo Carriazo, Jilska Chandrasena, Denise Chappell, Janel Hunt, Wes Rankins, Suzanne Severin and
Deborah Sutton-Weiss

Non-voting student representatives: Angelina Pinkney, Palm Springs High School
Kelli Martin, Raymond Cree Middle School

Commission Retreat – September 12, 2015

This is the list of topics and areas of focus identified by the Commission at the Sept. 12, 2015 planning meeting.

1. Homelessness
2. Veterans Issues
3. Race Relations
4. Ableism
5. Affordable/Fair Housing
6. Income Disparity
7. LGBT Issues
8. Seniors
9. Women's Representation on Boards and Commissions
10. Equal Access in Education/Government
11. Child Hunger

Commissioners outlined the following calendar and assigned Commissioners:

- October 2015: Gender Neutral Bathrooms and Transgender Issues **
 Guest Speakers: Jane Mills / Thomi Clinton
 Coordinated by Commissioners Sutton-Weiss and Hunt
- November 2015: Homelessness **
 Guest Speakers: Martha's Village and Well in the Desert
 Coordinated by Commissioners Chappell and Rankins w/
 input by Commissioner Severin
- December 2015: Affordable/Fair Housing **
 Guest Speakers: Dale Cook and Others
 Coordinated by Commissioner Rankins
- January 2016: Review/Re-strategize HRC Outreach Efforts **
 Coordinated by Chair Wilson Barton

February 2016: Community Service Awards **

March 2016: Race Relations **
 Guest Speakers: Desert Sun Race Relations Survey Group
 Coordinated by Commissioner Carriazo

April 2016: Equal Access in Education/Government **
 Guest Speaker: TBA
 Coordinated by Commissioner Hunt and Vice Chair Newby

May 2016: Women's Issues/Child Hunger
 Guest Speakers: TBA
 Coordinated by Chair Wilson Barton and Student Rep. Angelina Pinkney
 Commissioner Hunt to address Child Hunger

A Veterans offsite event at the American Legion
 Coordinated by Commissioner Severin

June 2016: LGBT Issues
 Guest Speaker: TBA
 Coordinated by Commissioner Sutton-Weiss

** Designates that this issue was reviewed and discussed by the Human Rights Commission during the year.

Human Rights Commission Meeting – October 12, 2015

Guest Speakers: Thomi Clinton, President and Founder of Transgender Community Coalition and TDOR Palm Springs, spoke on the legal obligations and requirements to provide successful integration of transgender people into our community.

Jane Mills, Director of Student Services for the Palm Springs Unified School District, spoke about understanding the law of transgender topics in the school system.

Community Outreach: Commissioners were assigned to provide outreach and information to various community organizations:

- Mizell: Newby and Chandrasena
- Desert Highland: Wilson Barton and Hunt
- LGBT Center: Newby, Rankins and Chappell
- Libraries: Severin and Chandrasena
- Board of Education: Sutton-Weiss, Chandrasena & Wilson Barton
- ONE-PS: Newby
- Palm Springs Art Museum: Severin
- Desert AIDS Project: Newby and Chappell

Other City Affiliations during the year:

- CDBG: Wilson Barton
- Police Department's LGBT Outreach Committee: Rankins & Sutton-Weiss
- Homelessness Task Force Committee: Severin
- Ethics, Transparency and Government Reform Task Force: Newby (Although his second term on the Commission ended June 30, Chair Newby, who serves on the Task Force independent of the Commission, has said he could continue to report to the Commission on the work of the Task Force because of some of the overlapping areas of concern.)

Task Force Assignments: HRC Logo Committee – Commissioners Rankins, Severin, Carriazo

Human Rights Commission Meeting – November 9, 2015

Guest Speakers: Janice Delagrammatikas, Principal for the Come Back Kids Program, Riverside County Office of Education, spoke about the program and how it helps young people challenged by drugs, alcohol or life choices to obtain a high school diploma.

Arlene Rosenthal, Director of Well in the Desert, spoke on issues of homelessness in Palm Springs and how the City and public can assist in finding solutions to these problems and in promoting awareness and understanding.

Participation: Veterans Day Parade and Transgender Day of Remembrance Vigil

Community Service Awards: Commissioners Sutton-Weiss, Rankins and Carriazo served on the committee that received the nominations. The committee updated the Commission on the application process.

Human Rights Commission Meeting – December 14, 2015

Guest Speakers: Dale Cook, Community Development Administrator for the City of Palm Springs, addressed affordable rental opportunities in Palm Springs and tenants facing rent increases.

Monica Lopez, Program Manager of Fair Housing Council of Riverside County, addressed the fair housing legalities on rental agreements, renewals, and rent increases and issues affecting the local rental market.

Task Force: Logo Committee: Reported on its progress of developing a new logo for the HRC and secured the help of a local graphics company to assist pro-bono.

Homelessness Task Force Committee: Commissioner Severin provided an update on the committee's work.

Service Awards: The Committee reported on the award recipients for Feb. 8, 2016

- American Legion Post 519, a volunteer veterans service organization which provides community center services and also sponsors a local Boy Scout troop
- Thomi Clinton for her educational and awareness activities throughout the community on issues specific to those who are transgender
- Olive Crest for its 40 years of working with families and at-risk youth in the prevention of child abuse
- Dimitri Halkidis, founder of Boo2bullying Inc., for his work in the community to educate students and faculty
- Incight for its work in assisting people with disabilities in the areas of education and employment training and adaptive athletics.
- Hank Plante, Emmy award winning journalist serving on the Editorial Board of the Desert Sun, for his support and reporting on human rights
- Safe House of the Desert for providing emergency shelter, intervention and outreach to youth in crisis. It also educates the community on human trafficking and offers help to the victims of human trafficking
- Mark Walthour for his work in Desert Highland/Gateway Estates and the Clinton Day of Action and Community Block Grant Program

Human Rights Commission Meeting – January 11, 2016

- Service Awards:** The procedures of the Community Service Awards set for February 8 were reviewed and Commissioners were assigned award recipients to contact and meet prior to the awards.
- Upcoming Calendar:** The Commission reviewed upcoming presentations on the subjects that were assigned during the September planning meeting.

Human Rights Commission Meeting – February 8, 2016

- Service Awards:** Mayor Moon was present representing the City of Palm Springs and assisted in presenting awards to the various recipients. He invited Councilmember Kors who was present in the audience to also assist and participate in the awards presentations.
- Chair Wilson Barton made opening remarks on the scope of the Human Rights Commission outreach efforts, activities and event participation. She highlighted the HRC Mediation Program and made special mention of the recent passing of activist George Zander.

Human Rights Commission Meeting – March 14, 2016

Guest Speakers: Palm Springs Police Chief Bryan Reyes and Police Captain Walter Combs spoke about race relations in Palm Springs and the Department’s training and outreach efforts to various aspects of the community. There was also discussion of issues specific to the Desert Highland Community.

Events: The Commission determined to participate in the ONE-PS Annual Picnic and Community Expo on March 19.

The Commission voted to participate and sponsor a table at the Harvey Milk Diversity Breakfast on May 20.

Task Force: Logo Committee: The Logo Committee presented possible designs. After review of the proposed logos and discussion, the Commission approved the logo design – see below:



Outreach: Commissioner Severin continues to attend the Homelessness Task Force Committee meetings and provided a report to the Commission.

Changes: Chair Wilson Barton resigned as of this Commission meeting and Commissioner Carriazo announced his resignation as well.

Human Rights Commission Meeting – April 11, 2016

Guest Speakers: Palm Springs Chief of Staff/City Clerk James Thompson discussed the outreach efforts currently being made by the City of Palm Springs in recruiting for Boards and Commissions as well as the meeting notice process and policies for Board, Commission and City Council meetings. He also spoke of the availability of e-mail notification of meeting agendas.

Changes: Following the resignation of Chair Wilson Barton, an election was held for a new Commission Chair to serve through June. Vice Chair Newby was elected to serve as Chair.

Outreach: Commissioner Severin confirmed a table at the Harvey Milk Diversity Breakfast and asked for Commissioner participation.

Commissioner Severin confirmed a film presentation for Wednesday, October 12, at the Library. Subjects for the film are being finalized.

Commissioner Severin reported on her attendance at the Homelessness Task Force Committee meetings. The major concern is maintaining a location for Well in the Desert as well as establishing a 24/7 resource center and location for homeless individuals.

Chair Newby is a member of the new Ethics, Transparency and Government Reform Task Force and reported on its progress and timeline.

New Business: Commissioner Chandrasena brought up concerns about the Medical Marijuana Dispensaries in Palm Springs. Following discussion, this item will be on the May agenda with information provided to Commissioners prior to the meeting regarding the ordinance and how it is implemented.

Human Rights Commission Meeting – May 9, 2016

Guest Speakers: The topic for this meeting was Ableism. The guest speakers were Jesus Palominos and Julia R. Sauter. Ms. Sauter is a volunteer and substitute teacher at the Braille Institute. She has mild spastic cerebral palsy and is an advocate for people with disabilities. She graduated Magna Cum Laude from Mount St. Mary and has an MA in ethics. Mr. Palominos was born with retinitis pigmentosa. He related his experiences in special education and how it was not supportive. He has overcome early educational discrimination to be able to seek a further education.

Ms. Sauter noted that ableism is the institutionalized discrimination against those with disabilities.

Public Requests: Richard Noble requested a resolution from the Commission regarding the Equality Act. He also spoke in favor of the HRC endorsing the designation of Columbus Day, Oct. 10, as Indigenous People's Day.

Vice-Chair: Commissioner Rankins was elected to serve the remaining term for Vice Chair – next election will be July 11.

Outreach: Commissioner Sutton-Weiss was selected to be the HRC representative on the Transgender Community Coalition planning committees.

The Commission has a table at the upcoming Harvey Milk Diversity Breakfast.

It was confirmed that the Human Rights Commission will sponsor a film showing at the Library on Wednesday, October 12 at 6:30 p.m. Commissioner Severin recommended the film "The Home Stretch" which follows three homeless teens. The Well in the Desert is interested in partnering with the Commission on this presentation.

Commissioner Severin reported on the activities of the Homelessness Task Force Committee.

Chair Newby reported on the Ethics, Transparency and Government Reform Task Force and some of the draft recommendations.

Medical Cannabis: Commissioner Chandrasena requested information regarding the approval of Medical Marijuana Dispensaries. City staff provided comprehensive information on the process of selection as well as other supporting documentation. Following discussion, it was determined that there was no action necessary by the Human Rights Commission.

Task Force: The Logo Committee reported on its activities and it was determined to expend funds on logo branded material.

Commission Report: Chair Newby provided a draft of the annual report and asked for feedback. Commissioner Severin asked that the Commission's Mediation Services be highlighted in the report.

Human Rights Commission Meeting – June 13, 2016

Guest Speakers: LGBT Issues – Antonio Lopez-Cochran, Chair of Some Fabulous Leos which supports local LGBT organizations, provided a history of the non-profit organization which was founded in the early 2000s by George Zander as a way to celebrate Leo birthdays (George Zander was a Leo). The event has been held in several venues over the years and raises funds by selling raffle tickets for donated prizes, donations and pre-events. The organization is now a non-profit and over the years has donated thousands of dollars to local LGBT organizations and causes. A recent extension of its work has been to provide funds for lesbians who are in need of emergency financial assistance.

Equality Act Resolution: The Commission reviewed information regarding the Equality Act. Councilmember Geoff Kors made the presentation and mentioned that he hopes to involve the Human Rights Commission in more work in reviewing ordinances and matters coming to the City Council, such as a proposed non-discrimination in contracting ordinance and other similar issues. The Commissioners reviewed the Resolution and some changes were made as well as adding the names of Congressman Ruiz and President Obama. Upon motion duly made and seconded, the Commission unanimously approved moving the Equality Act Resolution to City Council for adoption.

Proclamation: Councilmember Geoff Kors presented a Proclamation to Richard Noble in recognition of his efforts to bring the Equality Act Resolution to the City of Palm Springs and that it appeared that the City would be the first to pass such a resolution.

**Non-discrimination
in contracting:**

The Commission is being asked to review a non-discrimination in contracting draft ordinance and provide input. Councilmember Geoff Kors advised Commissioners that the draft ordinance was still being worked on and not yet ready for their review. He is also working on an equal benefits ordinance. Currently California is the only state with an equal benefits law for domestic spouses, same sex spouses, opposite sex spouses and transgender employees. With such an ordinance, the City could only contract with entities that give the same benefits to domestic partners of its employees, for example, that are provided to same sex spouses of its employees. Palm Springs' equal benefits ordinance would encompass all categories. The Commission's review of this ordinance is expected in the very near future.

City Policy:

A review of the City's Administrative Policy Discrimination, Harassment and Retaliation was conducted at the request of Vice Chair Rankins. Chair Newby commented that he felt the policy did not go far enough in defining and outlining procedures for addressing what is sometimes called a "hostile work environment." This type of harassment does not come from a supervisor, but can be defined by a workplace environment consisting of sexual innuendos or jokes, conduct or harassment by fellow employees that is not consistent with a professional work environment, and similar workplace behavior. Commissioner Severin agreed that this type of workplace environment can occur and felt it should be addressed. The Commission's discussion of this topic is continuing.

Outreach:

Commissioner Severin reported that there had not been a Homelessness Task Force Committee Meeting in the past month, but that the committee was continuing its work.

Chair Newby reported on the Ethics and Transparency Task Force proceedings and that each sub-committee had submitted their reports and other Task Force members had an opportunity to comment. The reports will be released publically and the Task Force will probably meet in the fall to finalize their recommendations.

Other Matters:

The Commission discussed recruitment of two new student members for the upcoming year. It should be noted that the Palm Springs Human Rights Commission is the only Commission in the City that has student representatives for the purpose of gaining their input and providing an opportunity to learn how city government works.

A Human Rights Commissioner is regularly assigned to attend meetings of the Desert Highland Gateway Estates Community.

This Report:

Chair Newby advised he would update the Draft Report to reflect the actions of this Commission meeting and then, as the outgoing Chair, present it to the City Council at the first available date.

Human Rights Commission – Mediation Services

Commissioner Suzanne Severin has been working hard on promoting the existence of the Mediation Services provided by the Human Rights Commission. She is a certified mediator and after talking to City Manager David Ready, met with City Attorney Douglas Holland to discuss offering mediation when applicable for issues such as neighbor to neighbor disputes, possible housing disputes, and similar issues. During the course of the year, two matters were referred for Mediation. One resulted in a successful mediated resolution. In the second, the mediation session was unable to be scheduled because one of the parties did not agree to participate.