



Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations

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[PROPOSED] MINUTES
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS
Meeting of March 9, 2020
WDACS Teamwork/Ray Bartlett Conference Room

PRESENT: Jarrett Tomás Barrios
Ilan Davidson* (By Phone)
Adrian Dove
Jeanette Ellis-Royston
Michael Gi-Hao Cheung
Isabelle Gunning
Sam Liu
Fredrick Sykes
Sandra Thomas (By Phone)
**Not counted toward quorum purposes*

ABSENT: Porter Gilberg
Derric Johnson
Preeti Kulkarni
Guadalupe Montaña

STAFF: Robert Sowell
Grace Löwenberg
Jaye Winter

1. **Call to Order/Flag Salute and Moment of Silence:** President Jarrett Barrios called the meeting to order at 12:39 p.m. with a quorum of 8 commissioners in attendance.
2. **Approval of Minutes:** It was moved by Commissioner Isabelle Gunning and seconded by Commissioner Sam Liu to approve the minutes of the Commission meeting of February 3, 2020. The motion carried unanimously.
3. **President's Report**

3.1 Jeannette Ellis-Royston Board of Supervisors Recognition: The board recently recognized the Pomona Valley branch of the NAACP for the 100-year anniversary of its establishment, with Commissioner Jeannette Ellis-Royston as its representative and receiving the award thanks to Supervisor Hilda Solis of the First District. Of 2,500 branches nationally, California NAACP has 52 branches.

3.2 Coronavirus Fears Stoking Negative Stereotyping and Biased Behavior: Assistant Executive Director Robert Sowell reported that in working with 211 LA (our Anti-Hate Initiative partner) in light of the COVID-19 situation and a possible rise in discriminatory incidents, 211 LA is giving special attention to this concern. We continue encouraging folks experiencing such to report any incidents to 211. Moreover, 211 staff are being asked to provide information directly from the Department of Public Health regarding the virus in order to give callers factual and accurate information. Additionally, at a recent board meeting, Mr. Sowell presented along with the Department of Health and LA County Office of Education, on what actions the agencies are taking relating to the developments. He also participated in a five-minute KTLA segment relating to the same, urging people to respond not by fear but with facts, and to discourage anti-Asian and anti-Chinese discrimination.

Finally, Executive Director Robin Toma also participated in a press conference to the same effect with Supervisor Hilda Solis, Special Services for Groups, and the Asian Pacific Policy & Planning Council. In all, 211 has reported only a few incidents. We remain in conversation with the Department of Health for widespread, combined communication relating both to the facts and the message of nondiscrimination.

4. Executive Director's Report:

4.1 Update on Staffing: The hiring process for Senior Human Relations Consultant (Sr. HRC) vacancies is having some movement forward. After the most recent exam and dissemination of a human relations questionnaire to candidates who met minimum requirements, responses were received from four of them. Three have been interviewed, and the fourth will be interviewed next week. In particular, two of the four are being pursued. Following that will be an exam for Human Services Administrator I, from which candidates may also be drawn to fill any remaining Sr. HRC vacancies.

4.2 Presentation to CivRUTA on Addressing Overt Prejudice in Public Meetings: On February 20, Robert Sowell with the help of Robin Toma, and at the request of LA County Quality and Productivity Commission Chair Shawn Landres, led and presented a training at an event sponsored by the Jewish Federation of LA, titled "CivRUTA"—a combination of the words "civic" and the Hebrew "chavruta," or communal studies. The training was geared for people who wish to serve on public commissions and bodies, with an angle of what actions they may take or how they ought to respond in the event that public participants or others are offensive during public comment period without breaking the law. Mr. Sowell shared and circulated handouts with slides from his presentation for commissioners to see. He explained the legal framework of public meetings, why freedom of speech is important from a constitutional perspective, why the Brown Act is in place, and the California penal code that prohibits disruption of meetings. He provided preparatory steps, group agreements on how meetings ought to proceed, time limits for public speaking, and specific methods rooted in human relations approaches to respond effectively in such aforementioned instances. The training was well received.

5. Committee Reports

5.1 Ad Hoc Committee on Policing and Human Relations: Committee Chair Isabelle Gunning reported that the policing report is being disseminated to all commissioners, deputies, and stakeholders for review by close of business today. The team is requesting that all feedback be provided by March 20, shortly after which it will then generate the final draft.

5.2 John Anson Ford (JAF) Awards Event Committee: Committee Chair Davidson relayed that the JAF Awards event committee and staff recommends that the event date be moved to 2021. This is due to IAOHRA 2020 conference preparations overlapping in the fall, in addition to the shortage in HRC staffing at present. One possibility being the Tuesday 19, 2021, the day after MLK Day in January. Commissioners discussed the proposed timing, noting it may be a busy time particularly in African American communities with MLK and related events. Additionally, the committee further continues its deliberation of a location change, monetizing the awards, and charging for attendance. A change in date notwithstanding, the committee does ask that commissioners proceed with submitting their nominations by May of this year. Whether the 2021 date will be a one-time adjustment or fixed across subsequent years is a decision that may be clarified in the coming months.

5.3 Ad Hoc IAOHRA LA 2020 Conference Committee: Committee Chair Davidson shared that the host committee is planning a Sunday night welcome reception where celebrities will be invited, hosted by a high-profile master of ceremonies. Two other large events are also being planned, one being an event with

EJ and Cookie Johnson on understanding cross-gender and nonbinary youth and people, and the other a televised human rights town hall at which all major presidential candidates will be invited. The committee is discussing fundraising, surveying the various events across Los Angeles that week, and is considering an interfaith invocation on the first morning. Conversations on programming will continue this week, with Mr. Toma in Washington, DC for a series of IAOHRA board meetings. Davidson also commended Senator Ted Lieu and his office for posting internship requests to assist with both IAOHRA conference and JAF Awards event planning. Over 44 interested parties have responded. The intent is for four interns to be co-sponsored by IAOHRA and Senator Ben Allen's office for event planning and logistics, for seeking human relations speakers and celebrity outreach, and fundraising. The exact roles, supervision structure, and more are to be detailed in coming weeks.

5.4 Ad Hoc Policy and Advocacy Committee: Committee Chair Montañó was absent. No report.

6. Action/Discussion Items

6.1 Anti-Hate Initiative: Sr. Human Relations Consultant Terri Villa-McDowell was absent. Item tabled.

6.2 Countywide Equity Initiative: Mr. Sowell reminded commissioners about, and summarized, the board's tasking of the Human Relations branch with coordination of a countywide Equity Initiative in conjunction with the Department of Human Resources and CEO. He shared the initiative's latest framework and explained the progress thus far in creating a countywide network of department leaders committed to advancing equity. Along with its internal mission, the network intends to develop equity standards for conducting business with contractors and the external populations they serve. He briefly walked commissioners through the framework's focus groups, highlighting that the lead Equity Initiative team is developing a motion for the board to consider resourcing a centralized county office of equity, as distinct from the County Equity Oversight Panel, which serves a different function.

6.3. LACCHR Place in County Government Structure: Executive Director Robin Toma will circulate via email the draft of the commission's recommendation letter to the board on the commission's place in the County structure. In that email, he will also seek the authorization from each commissioner to add their signature. Commissioners agreed and merely requested that, once sent, they be given time to provide feedback and any last input prior to a final draft.

6.4 JAF Awards Event: Item covered in 5.2

7. Commissioners' Comments/Announcements: Commissioner Fred Sykes offered comments regarding the Alabama capital punishment case of Nathaniel Woods. Commissioner Sam Liu suggested watching "The Trial of Gabriel Fernandez" on Netflix given its relevance to LA County government (and the Department of Child & Family Services in particular), and Commissioner Jeannette Ellis-Royston expressed interest in inviting DCFS, and any other departments with human relations cross-over areas, to present to the commission in the future on how they may be able to collaborate.

8. Adjournment: It was moved by Sykes and seconded by Liu to adjourn the meeting. Without objection, the meeting adjourned at 1:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Guadalupe Montañó
Commission Vice President-Secretary