



Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations

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[PROPOSED] MINUTES
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS

Meeting of April 6, 2020

Meeting via Microsoft Teams Video & Audio Conferencing

PRESENT: Jarrett Tomás Barrios
Ilan Davidson
Adrian Dove
Jeanette Ellis-Royston
Porter Gilberg
Isabelle Gunning
Derric Johnson
Preeti Kulkarni
Sam Liu
Guadalupe Montaña
Fredrick Sykes
Sandra Thomas

ABSENT: Michael Gi-Hao Cheung

STAFF: Robin Toma
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 12:32 p.m. with a quorum of 12 commissioners in attendance.
- 2. Approval of Minutes:** It was moved by Commissioner Sandra Thomas and seconded by Commissioner Fredrick Sykes to approve the minutes of the Commission meeting of March 9, 2020. The motion carried with 11 votes in favor. Commissioners Porter Gilberg and Guadalupe Montaña abstained.

3. President's Report

3.1 International Red Cross Perspective on the Coronavirus Pandemic on LA: President Barrios offered a brief international perspective on COVID-19 related developments from his role as CEO of the American Red Cross, Los Angeles Region, noting the pandemic is only now beginning to truly impact developing countries, some of which had already been thin on their capacity to respond. Various humanitarian organizations, the Red Cross among them, are operationalizing as a number of countries that normally offer up relief are currently tending to their own domestic responses.

4. Executive Director's Report:

4.1 Report on Rise in Hate Due to COVID-19 and Commission Response: Executive Director Robin Toma shared that the Human Relations Commission is one of the few commissions that is continuing to function through the COVID-19 developments. Data collected by 211 LA and LAPD indicate a recent increase in reports of hate acts, particularly anti-Asian incidents correlating with the pandemic. Namely, at least 27 anti-Asian hate crimes and incidents have been recorded since January, where only 11 anti-Asian hate

crimes were reported last year. In response, the branch is raising awareness through press conferences, interviews, communiqués and social media, as well as continues mobilizing to expand resources and increase community partnerships that help stem such trend. Staff continues tracking responses to any reports, ensuring proper follow-up and resources for reported victims. A special Network Against Hate Crime meeting is being organized to address the subject, and a Quality & Productivity Commission Productivity Investment Fund (QPC PIF) grant application was submitted to develop an online training on addressing bias during emergencies for all county employees because they can be deployed as Disaster Service Workers (DSWs).

4.2 Changes in Staffing, Working and Meeting Methods, and Budget: Mr. Toma imparted that the County has been at the core of the COVID-19 response and is developing methods of continuing to carry out its essential services to the public. As a department, WDACS has shifted to largely working remotely and is further strengthening an infrastructure to facilitate that transition. Budgetarily, the pandemic's effect on economic activity, local revenue, and property as well as sales taxes, are going to impact County funding. At present, HRC's budget is advancing as originally submitted in January, including an allocation for the Anti-Hate Initiative's (AHI) Human Services Administrator I (HSA I) anticipated position. Yet, the final budget may be modified based on reductions of Net County Costs—upon which, among community centers for example, much human relations programming is reliant. Finally, the Board passed a hiring freeze last week that was effective immediately. HRC acted quickly and with the help of the Human Resources Division, secured the hiring of two Senior Human Relations Consultants (Sr. HRCs), with a third expected to successfully onboard soon. There is hope also that, with CEO's blessing, the AHI HSA I and a second, permanent HSA I (currently filled by an interim Acting HSA I) might proceed to being filled. In light of CEO advisories regarding the possibility of cuts, though nothing is specific as yet, HRC continues advocating to maintain its budget for its new—and long-awaited—hires, particularly with the aforementioned reports of COVID-19 related hate acts and the need to protect impacted communities.

5. Committee Reports

- 5.1 Ad Hoc Committee on Policing and Human Relations:** Committee Chair Isabelle Gunning reported the committee is moving forward as best it can in producing and publishing the report for the full commission's final review. Since the draft was disseminated, now the committee is refining the report's design. The video likewise remains in production. In early May, the committee will convene again to further finalize the project. By then, feedback from agencies and stakeholders will have been received and considered for integrating into the final version of the report. Gunning also shared example recommendations from the report relating to such areas as surveillance technologies, surveillance of communities, and making LA County a restorative county.
- 5.2 John Anson Ford (JAF) Awards Event Committee:** Committee Chair Ilan Davidson relayed that the JAF Awards are officially being moving to the Tuesday after MLK weekend: January 19, 2021. More details are to come. Meanwhile, nominations are still being encouraged. Staff lead Ray Regalado and Executive Secretary Grace Löwenberg are preparing and coordinating the dissemination of nomination packets.
- 5.3 Ad Hoc IAOHRA LA 2020 Conference Committee:** Committee Chair Davidson noted that the host committee members met following the national committee's meeting. Due to the effects of the pandemic response, the host committee's unanimous recommendations are that the 2020 IAOHRA conference be postponed to 2021, keeping Los Angeles as the host city, and that the committees forego paying the next \$25,000 deposit to Hotel Indigo; consulting with legal counsel about the contract's force majeure clause. Counsel is reviewing the legal details presently and will report back.

5.4 Ad Hoc Policy and Advocacy Committee: Committee Chair Montañó reported she and the Executive Secretary are working to convene a meeting of the committee soon.

6. Action/Discussion Items

6.1 Commission Statement on COVID-19: President Barrios and Mr. Toma suggested that the commission consider developing a statement to the community offering its unique perspective on COVID-19, namely highlighting the general sense that irrespective of pandemic related concerns, biases ought not lead to acts of hostility or hate; that all may benefit from checking if our actions are based on stereotyping and assumptions . Due to the urgency, if no objections, the president and executive director seek delegated authority to develop the statement, to solicit input by circulating it to commissioners, and to officially issue it should it be necessary prior to the May commission meeting. None objected.

6.2 Impact of COVID-19 on IAOHRA 2020 Conference in LA:

The commission formalized the recommendations as discussed in the committee's report. (See item 5.3.)

It was moved by Commissioner Adrian Dove and seconded by Commissioner Gunning to recommend to the IAOHRA Board that the 2020 IAOHRA Conference be postponed to 2021, maintaining the selection of Los Angeles as the host region; and to forego the upcoming \$25,000 deposit installment to Hotel Indigo invoking the contractual force majeure clause upon consulting with legal counsel. The motion carried unanimously.

6.3. LACCHR Place in County Government Structure: Item tabled.

6.4 Creation of an Ad Hoc Committee on Equity of Impact and Response to COVID-19: President Barrios proposed that the Commission develop a committee to draw upon the knowledge and expertise of individual commissioners which focuses on equity in response to COVID-19 developments. Such a committee may inform and strengthen current efforts such as the Countywide Equity Initiative, which is working with departments to advance equity in areas of assessment and metrics; procurement and contracting; hiring, promoting and training; as well as with respect to community engagement and services. The charge for the proposed committee is to identify key issues and questions regarding specific inequities and the need for equity in ways government and communities are addressing the pandemic. Such issues may include: how to ensure that in emergency response efforts, low-income and communities of color are being treated fairly in access to support for daily living needs (e.g., food, shelter, and access to health care); what may be expected of school districts to ensure that lower income students can fully engage in remote learning? The President added that the committee may also consider other methods of taking action to advocate for the commission's anti-hate work, or for the defense against inequities in budgetary reductions. In turn, the committee would offer a mechanism by which the commission and executive director may bring forth important recommendations and questions before the Countywide Equity Initiative coordinating group, the WDACS department, other departments, or even the County.

It was moved by Montañó and seconded by Gunning to approve the establishment of the ad hoc Committee on Equity of Impact and Response to COVID-19. The motion carried unanimously.

7. **Commissioners' Comments/Announcements:** Gilberg requested that commissioners please be apprised when Human Relations staff are participating in meetings in their home districts. Sykes inquired if it is possible for the commission and staff to advocate for equitable internet access for all students in LA County, in the midst of remote learning due to the current developments. Toma agreed that staff can consult with LAUSD and LACOE. Dove asked the commission to consider a resolution commending Mayor Garcetti and Governor Newsom for their responses to the pandemic.
8. **Adjournment:** It was moved by Dove and seconded by Gunning to adjourn the meeting in memory of those who have passed due to COVID-19, as well as in memory of Beatriz Solis, Ph.D., highly respected staff of The California Endowment, and sister of Supervisor Hilda Solis. Without objection, the meeting adjourned at 2:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Guadalupe Montañó
Commission Vice President-Secretary