



Committee on Human Services

The committee convened on April 8th at 5:51pm in the City Council Office. Present were Tony Palomba, Chair, Carolyn Bays, Vice Chair, and Emily Izzo, Secretary. The purpose of the meeting was to conduct three reappointments to the Human Rights Commission.

Susan Musinsky

Ms. Musinsky discussed her role on the Commission and noted that she enjoys working on initiatives that are still in development and helping to shape their direction. She highlighted her involvement in the request for proposals process for a needs assessment and assisting a subgroup in guiding that effort. She also referenced a logo design initiative involving a local middle school art class. Ms. Musinsky stated that the Commission has begun to engage in more substantive work, including defining human rights and fostering community dialogue. She emphasized that many individuals may not recognize when their rights have been violated or may feel uncomfortable coming forward. She identified a need for increased public outreach, a more user-friendly complaint process, and improved communication among Commission members.

- **Action Item-** Councilor Izzo made a motion seconded by Councilor Bays to reappoint **Susan Musinsky** to the Human Rights Commission with a term expiring April 1, 2029. The motion passed 3-0.

Lisa LaPlante

Ms. LaPlante stated that she has greatly enjoyed serving on the Commission and described it as a collaborative and dedicated group. She noted that the work has involved a learning curve as the Commission continues to establish its role and priorities. Ms. LaPlante has taken a lead role in the rules subcommittee and has been working to build connections with local schools. She discussed ongoing efforts to develop a logo and increase the Commission's visibility in the community. Ms. LaPlante explained that the Commission does not have the authority to resolve disputes but may issue reports, hold public hearings, and provide mediation. She emphasized the importance of outreach and education, including public service announcements and engagement with students, to increase awareness of human rights issues. She expressed a desire to build on the Commission's foundational work and move toward a more structured action plan.

- **Action Item-** Councilor Izzo made a motion seconded by Councilor Bays to reappoint **Lisa LaPlante** to the Human Rights Commission with a term expiring April 1, 2029. The motion passed 3-0.

Mel Poindexter

Mr. Poindexter reflected on the Commission's progress, noting that it was established from the ground up and has since developed a mission and direction. He highlighted efforts to build relationships with other regional human rights commissions, including collaborative sessions

with neighboring communities. Mr. Poindexter identified future goals of expanding outreach to diverse cultural groups and increasing community engagement through “Know Your Rights” initiatives and training efforts. He noted that relatively few cases have been brought before the Commission, citing factors such as fear, desire for anonymity, and lack of awareness. He emphasized that the Commission seeks to provide support and increase visibility within the community. The commission has worked with District Attorney Marian Ryan, as well as Captain Dan Unsworth to spread awareness.

- **Action Item-** Councilor Izzo made a motion seconded by Councilor Bays to reappoint **Mel Poindexter** to the Human Rights Commission with a term expiring April 1, 2029. The motion passed 3-0.

The meeting adjourned at 6:31pm.

ELECTED OFFICIALS

Anthony Palomba,
Chair

Caroline Bays,
Vice Chair

Emily Izzo,
Secretary