



Draft Minutes

WEDNESDAY, April 17th, 2024

In-Person Meeting, 6:00 p.m. – 7: 00 p.m.

Location: Council Chambers

202 C. Street, 12th Floor, SD, CA 9210

[HRC YouTube Link](#)

Commissioners: Olympia Beltran, Rickie Brown, Sara Brown, Faye Detsky-Weil, Yessica Diaz-Roman, Tyler Duncan, MH Fields, Julia Legaspi, April Purcell, Tootie Thomas, Ryan Trabuco, Daneyel Walker, Nicole Murray-Ramirez.

Staff Liaison Executive Director: Gerald W. Brown

Item 1: Call to Order- Chair Tootie Thomas called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. PST. Chair Thomas asked the Commissioners and audience to join with a land acknowledgement the land of the coyote I that you recognition of and with respect for Indigenous Peoples as traditional stewards of the land that we now call the city of San Diego for millennia, the Kumeyaay people have been a part of this land. This land has nourished, healed, protected, and embraced them for many generations in a relationship of balance and harmony. As members of the San Diego community and inhabitants of Tipai Kumeyaay territory we acknowledge this legacy, we promote this balance and harmony, and we find inspiration.

Item 2: Roll Call- Vice Chair Tyler Duncan:

Present Commissioners: Olympia Beltran, Rickie Brown, Sara Brown, Faye Detsky-Weil, Yessica Diaz-Roman, Tyler Duncan, MH Fields, Tootie Thomas, Ryan Trabuco, Daneyel Walker,

Absent Commissioners: Nicole Murray-Ramirez, April Purcell

Excused Absent Commissioner: Julie Legaspi

Vacant Seats to be filled: Council Districts 1, 5, and 9. Mayoral (1) Appointee

Prior to ending this item Chair Thomas reminded the commissioners regarding absents that they are only allowed 2 during a given year and that the Brown Act Remote Appearance for Emergency Circumstance that the member must request the board/commission to allow them to appear remotely at the earliest available opportunity and receive approval. A general description of the reason must be given, which need not exceed 20 words. The member need not disclose any medical diagnosis, disability, or personal medical information exempt by law. A separate request must be made for each meeting.

Item 3: HRC Minutes - March 2024 - Chair Tootie Thomas called for a motion in regard to the minutes - Secretary Ryan Trabuco motion and a second from Commissioner Detsky-Weil to approve the minutes from our March 2024 meeting. A roll call vote was conducted. The vote carried with majority in favor and one (1) abstention.

Public Comment on an Agenda Item/Public Comment on Matters Not on the Agenda read. No public comment at that time.

Item 5: Standing Committee-Discrimination and Equal Protection-Executive Director Brown reported the committee met on 4-15- 2024, at 5p.m. Brown stated that Committee members Vice Chair Duncan and Commissioner Faye Detsky-Weil were present for the meeting. The ED and the commissioners discussed a couple of cases that were pending before the committee, and they also went over the HRC Tracker Documentation as well. Brown mentioned that they had a very intense discussion about the purview of the Commission as it relates to equal opportunity, equal protection clause and what jurisdiction did the Commission have to ensure participation from complainant and respondents. ED Brown also stated that he met with Deputy City Attorney Joan Dawson for about an hour. He said they discussed the active complaints, the purview of the HRC to handle said complaints, as well as how to mitigate possible legal liability for the commission.

ED Brown went on to present the HRC Tracker Documentation to HRC Commissioners.

Item 6: Subcommittee Report-Vice Chair Tyler Duncan - Provided two (2) Sub-committees Reports.

Vice Chair Duncan gave updates on San Diego United Against Hate and the HRC Community Engagement Sub-committee.

- A. San Diego United Against Hate Sub-committee met on April 10, 2024. Commissioners present were Commissioner Rickie Brown, Commissioner Sarah Brown, and Commissioner MH Fields. Vice Chair Duncan expressed his appreciation to the commissioners for their participation on the subcommittees. He said they begin with establishing a structure for the subcommittees as previously discussed with the entire Commission. He said they sent out calendar invites and save the dates on all the Commissioners' s calendars for the remainder of the year. He went on to say, if, any of those dates do not necessarily fit into individual schedules, as well as, if there were any recognized holidays or celebrations that we should consider rescheduling events or meetings. So far, those dates that have been sent out, and everyone seemed to be in agreement. SDUAH meets on the first Wednesday of every month. One of the topics discussed was the history around San Diego United Against Hate. He said, the committee members talked a little bit about the space that the initiative is currently in with collaboration from the San Diego Anti-Hate Coalition as well as support from the US Attorney's Office. SDUAH committee members also discussed the potential revisions or updates to the proclamation from 2022 which was supported by Mayor Todd Gloria. Vice Chair Duncan said that he and Commissioner Rickie Brown attended the San Diego Anti-Hate Coalition meeting today and were able to get in contact with the organizer regarding the SDUAH Initiative. He said, they're look forward to being able to put in place more action items for an upcoming sub-committee meeting in May.
- B. Community Engagement Sub-committee Vice Chair Duncan said is set to meet tomorrow 4-18-2024. He said the sub-committee also went ahead and put all meeting dates on the calendar invites for the year. The committee is hoping to further discuss how they can continue support in anticipations of some of the events. Vice Chair Duncan said that he would be sending out later that night some pending agenda items. He continued to say that some of the



infrastructure was already put in place around the agenda, flyers, and different means of the awards. He said the commissioners have that foundation of reference as they move forward. He stated that Commissioner Yessica Diaz Roman created an event interest form that the sub-committee is still collaborating on and hoping to get some more input from the rest of the subcommittee tomorrow.

Item 7: Executive Director Report - Gerald Brown

- A. Appointments/Resignations – Brown reminded the commissioners to please follow the request of the City Clerk’s Office to ensure that they are able to conduct the Commission’s business once they are assigned.
- B. Code of Conduct – Update – In Rules – Brown stated there are no update.
- C. District meeting visits ideas and Council District office partnership – Chair spoke to the desire to move HRC meeting to each of Council Districts. However, he stated that he would like to have a calendar with the dates and location in advance with a couple of months’ notice. This would give the HRC Representative time to prepare for the event.

Item 8: Executive Committee Report- Chair Tootie Thomas

Discussion on Jewish/Islamic hate in San Diego and how the Commission move forward with sensitivity. We will be addressing guidelines, goals, and parameters at our next Executive Committee meeting. Commissioners are invited to make comments or submit ideas, as well as best practices for consideration.

The Goals of the City of San Diego Human Relations Commission – is always to promote Civility and Peace, while providing a Safe place for Peaceful discussion.

Item 9: Fentanyl - Special Guest Karrie Gonzales

Ms. Gonzales is the mother of 21 year old Eric Gonzales who died from Fentanyl poisoning on June 12/20/2020. Ms. Gonzales said the following: I just want to make a little correction, if he had known what he used was fentanyl it would have been considered an overdose, but. he believed it was something else. I want to state that I don't condone drug use and I'm not saying that his choices were correct, but he unknowingly took something that he thought was something else, and he died from fentanyl poisoning which I consider murder. I'll just give the kind of quick back story. His addiction started in high school when he was injured playing sports and he was prescribed opiates, which a lot of kids and a lot of people have been prescribed. This is how the whole opiate crisis started with doctors over prescribing opiates, which has led us now to the whole fentanyl crisis. She said, Eric progressed through high school and he decided he wasn't going to play sports anymore. She said, “I think that it was because of you know his nose essentially being opened to the opiates.” Ms. Gonzales said, we didn’t let this happen because I was very aware and could see the signs and we were trying to do as much as we could, and be proactive, but, he was 18 when he graduated high school and at that point his addiction became pretty overpowering. It was pretty evident that now he was addicted to drugs and I couldn't do anything about it. Once, he turned 18 because in in this state once a child turns 18, basically as a parent don’t have rights, but I did do everything humanly possible. I get a little nervous, but his addiction progressively got worse and by the time I was able to talk him into going to Rehab, he was 21.

Eric went into rehab in March of 2020; and then COVID hit, and because of COVID the world shut down. She said, nobody really knew what to do, so everything we were doing was done and then he couldn't do rehab, and that just isolated things, even worse, he left rehab after 86 days on June 5th, 2020, and on June 12th he was poisoned with fentanyl. She said they found him on 6/13/2020. Ms. Gonzales said, I'm advocating about is how grateful a person he was and I know who he was. She went on to say, they put a lot of stigma on addiction and if they never struggled with addiction they really don't understand the gravity of what really addiction is about, and so I always like to tell people that again who he was and where he was or two different things and just because you struggle with addiction doesn't mean that it should be a death sentence. He unknowingly thought was something some other substance. Again, I'm not condoning that but, it was not and it was fentanyl that killed him and that's what's happening to a lot of kids. She said, right now, that's what's happening to most of the people that got caught up in this opiate epidemic. It could be anybody, and people aren't realizing it's not some guy you see on the street that is the drug deal anymore, it is the kids sitting in class with your kid, it is Snapchat and social media, because they're able to mail these things directly to your house. The media also I believe passes a lot of misinformation because when they are telling you that people are dying from pills that are laced with fentanyl. They're not laced, they're pure fentanyl! The media perpetuates a lot of false information and so does people who think that if you promote harm reduction or have Narcan to save somebody's life, that you're promoting drug use and you're not, because in our PM that also helps somebody that's an elderly person that maybe is taking medications and don't realize they're taking a poison. She said that she is tell Eric's story a lot and mainly because I believe that we need to break the stigmas in the United States, and I don't feel we do enough for people that struggle with mental illness or drug addiction. Ms. Gonzales was very candid with the facts of her own struggles, as a drug user for 25 years. She said, I'm telling you right now I survived my addiction, and they busted many people that I knew and I still was able to get drugs. We are never going to stop the supply because it's not the supply that's the problem, it's the demand. People need to realize that shutting the border is not going stop somebody. Until we start addressing this situation here in the United States, we are going to continue to have this problem. It shouldn't be cheaper to buy drugs than it is to get treatment. I want to say thank you for allowing me to share.

Chair Thomas asked Ms. Gonzales if she was open to questing, she said yes.

Commissioner Rickie Brown asked, Kerri what was it like dealing with the policeman? Ms. Gonzales responded, the police basically took his phone and then they took his body obviously and that was the last time I heard from anybody until I had to reach out a year late. thought they were still investigating his case back because he was considered a substance abuser. His case basically was put on the back burner and they closed his case a month after they took his body, but, I did not find out that investigation was closed until almost a year later. I was trying to find out when I was going to be able to retrieve his phone and his property. Since then every communication I've had with his case was my initial initiation. Yet I've dealt with a lot of families who have had their kids were first time users or maybe experimenting and their cases were dealt with a lot differently and actually investigated and there have been prosecutions. Most cases where people have died that had substance abuse issues, none of these cases have been investigated, resolved or had any prosecutions.

Chair Thomas asked, where did your son parish was it here in San Diego?

Ms. Gonzales responded that it was in Mira Mesa, City of San Diego. San Diego Police Department. She went on to say, I, don't I don't want to bash the whole process in a sense because I do a lot of speaking with the DA at different events that they host and they allow me to speak. I've already voiced with the US Attorney how I felt about how Eric's case was handled. Many parents that I know and I'm on a group with 39,000 that have lost loved ones to Fentanyl and almost 100% of our cases that the children suffered or even adults suffered with substance abuse. None of the cases are treated the same.

Commissioner Detsky-Weil – First, I want to say how sorry I am that this happened to you or anybody else. I'm just curious, what steps are you doing are you working with anyone on legislation or in the community to not only bring this to a people's attention but towards some kind of action; to lead towards fixing the situation?

Ms. Gonzales said, well I would like to get on the policy side of it, that's where I'm trying to get too; but, right now most of the policy is more for mass incarceration, rather than dealing with the demand side of the issue, and I think that's where a lot of the issue lies. It doesn't necessarily mean that mass incarceration didn't help back in the war on drugs, and it's not helping now especially since I mentioned the demand is the biggest problem. We are not addressing people that have mental health issues or substance abuse issues and it's cheaper for them to buy drugs than it is to get treatment and unless you have money it's hard to get treatment. I do a lot of advocacy work in schools; I speak in high schools with a retired DEA Agent. I do a lot of different events at the DA or even I've done I did a Public Service Announcement with DA Summer Stephan. I've done different events that the DA has me come to. I speak out, but, no awareness day, and no overdose awareness day. I've spoken with the media; I also go out in the community, and I pass out Narcan and teach people how to use it. I also do different stuff on Eric's social media and then as Rickie mentioned I'm just one of them the parents in this group and we do billboards all over United States and put our kids on there to bring awareness and then we do rallies and have the news media come out and speak about you know the effects and the misinformation. We also want to look at different social media, and in June we will be having a rally here in San Diego. There'll be a billboard going up in Lakeside and it'll be up for a year and that's the different stuff that I'm trying to do.

Commissioner Fields asked the following question: First and foremost thank you for being vulnerable,, and reliving the trauma that you've experienced over the last four years for the sake of the future of our children. I mean this is something that no parent wishes for but, you are placing yourself in the forefront to relive this trauma so, I, appreciate you as a young parent. Secondly, as an Educator; what would you say would be the thing that you have talked to other families that you needed from a criminal justice professional that would have aided in the process for you to have been not made whole because you'll never be whole again? How does the criminal justice system better serve families?

Ms. Gonzales responded: Eric should have been treated more as a human and not as just some drug addict that just died. I said his case was mishandled pretty badly and there was no communication at all after they took his body and his phone I literally never heard from anybody again until I did all the reaching out and there needs to be more a communication and maybe even like a peer to peer support that shows up. I know they do it for gun violence and different issues. Peer support when something happens on scene there's peer support that shows up to support the family. First off, you're in shock; I don't even know how to explain it to you what I was thinking, I can't even tell you most of what I said at

the scene because I was still trying to fathom that I was identifying my son's body and watching it go somewhere in a body bag and so if you don't communicate more or reach out or even nobody even told me what was going on with Eric's case. I didn't know it was my job to find out what police or investigators were doing. Their job wasn't supposed to be communicating with me, and so I think it's just better communication whether they had answers or not. or whether anybody's ever gonna be held responsible or not there needs to be better communications with the family and realize that you don't know my story or Eric's story and he wasn't just some junkie that side. He was some kid, he was 21 years old and he worked up until I and he was in rehab. He never been in trouble with the law and he was just some kid who got caught up in the opiate crisis and made a bad decision, and it cost him his life and he and you know and whether he knowingly used Fentanyl or didn't knowingly use fentanyl, he still should have been treated as a human being. He was my child and it could have been your child or anybody else's child or a loved one; and the way that you know people that are struggling with substance abuse or mental health issues are treated during these times needs to change.

Commissioner Beltran: Thank you so much for your advocacy. I have a deep respect for your willingness to come and speak on your son's behalf, and on behalf of all human beings with mental illness that are struggling with substance abuse. As a Registered Nurse that has been a medication assisted treatment nurse and has worked with such patients. I'm with you in that struggle and advocating for patients to be treated as human beings and not be criminalized for their conditions. I was going to ask what you feel is the role that this HRC you would like to see? Commissioner Beltran continues to say, that his HRC take in the process of humanizing folks that are struggling with substance abuse, but it sounds to me what I'm hearing is that you would like for us to advocate to SDPD for better communication with families is there anything else that you would like for us? Instead of criminalizing patients that are struggling with substance abuse disorder. You made a good point that you know reaching out better to the families as one.

Ms. Gonzales said, the education and awareness on this needs to start at a very early age and in society at this point where we're at by the time they're in junior high it's already too late and there needs to be more awareness put out and not the misinformation but more fairness for families and people who've experienced it but also have people stand behind us that are willing to stand there even if we're not all on the same side the end goal is to save lives. We don't have to all agree politically one way or another because to me it's not a political thing this is a human crisis that's affecting all humans it does not discriminate it does not care how much money you make who you vote for this is happening there's more deaths from the opioid crisis and fentanyl than in three wars we've had in the United States and you know the war on drugs and the shutting the border and that's the only option is not the option. Have a monthly meeting or invite families or maybe on your site or on their sites or other groups mention this because the shame, the stigma and silence also kill you know. It's not just the drugs it's the stigmas behind addiction, it's the shame that families you know and they hide it or don't want to admit it's happening or the silence because nobody's talking about it and I just know I think more awareness and needs to be out there.

Commissioner Trabuco: Thank you Karrie for speaking to us and again expressing my sympathies for your situation as well. I'm just sitting here thinking about more from the policy perspective of something

that could just state into potential legislation and the thing that I keep coming back to necessarily with the fentanyl issue specifically but. with the lack of communication for families when they go through something like the county function and role in government and in all of our lives. The county are cradle to grave organization; you know when you're born your birth certificates through the county, when you when you die your death certificates from the county. The reason I'm thinking about this from the county perspective is to your point. When you have a 2-year-old baby, and the medical examiner has to process that death certificate when your son goes through that you know medical examiner has to process that death certificate. Whether it's the county's rule either through Health and Human Services working in connection with either the Sheriff's Department or the District Attorney's Office, or maybe even the creation of some sort of Ombudsman Office to deal with helping families. not just you know through that trauma but also trying to get information more information about specifically in your case. The fact that you didn't know facts about your son's death for a year I find that reprehensible and that's just you know falling through the cracks and I can't imagine. You've mentioned that you're not the only individual and advocate on these on this issue that's had to face that so I would think at least from my perspective I'm thinking on a policy idea but maybe reaching out to your county supervisors to see if there's anything that they can work on from the county perspective; but, also at least to help families throughout the state maybe setting up meetings with your state assembly members and state senators. To see if there's some sort of state legislation that come through this that could fund an Ombudsman Offices throughout the state, that can help families with these kinds of situations.

Item 10: Chair Report - Chair Tootie Thomas

- A. Update for Immigrants and Refugees - The United States Citizen and Immigration Services one of the things that was up was medical, physical that's required for immigration purposes now has no expiration. That's great news. There's a new fee of course. There's two work related items, one is that acquiring a new Social Security Number will become a more seamless process, and the eligibility for working while you're getting yours. Going through the naturalization process and it to citizenship is now going from six months to being extended to 18 months. The last thing is 1/3 gender option on the forms.
- B. Conflict De-escalation Training - It was a great training and only lasted for an hour and a half. It was a reasonably priced, it cost \$10.00 for that training. Are you can get as many people as possible for \$99 dollars.

Item 11: Vice Chair Report - Vice Chair Tyler Duncan

- A. Iftar Dinner – Vice Chair Duncan said, in alignment with our mission to promote activities that foster understanding respect and inclusion amongst all San Diegans. Commissioner Rickie Brown and I had the opportunity to attend the annual If Tar Dinner, downtown at the Central Library. It was an amazing experience of really being able to these surrounded in that type of environment that really embraced love and cultural acceptance and just learning on my end. It was a first experience for me and I look forward to hopefully all of us continuing to engage in our community and seek to really understand these different cultures and identities and individuals that that we represent.

Item 12: Secretary's Report-Secretary Ryan Trabuco – Nothing to report at this time.

Commissioner Reports.

Commissioner Beltran: I wanted to report that the day after the award ceremony on in February, I, was able to collaborate with community members to leave it to distribute the food cards to Northgate so for all the flood victims in Shell-town by the Logan Heights area. We were just giving out food bags, take care some other books that were in need. Thank you so much we already had planned in the neighborhood and that was just an additional help and the families are very grateful. This month there are a lot fewer tents at the Paradise Senior Center and along the 5 Freeway and I want to believe that that extra little help was critical in helping those families to transition into transitional housing and back to more secure housing. Thank you so much. We were absolutely grateful for then also I wanted to report back from Kanaka Han Coalition. Commissioner Nicole Ramirez and I were assigned to the school names committee through San Diego Unified School District from the HRC to San Diego Unified School District school names committee. I have been the liaison between the school names committee and the Canadian Coalition, which is a coalition of local tribal leadership of Manzanita Sequan more Viejas. The various tribal leaders Sam Isabel have been informing on the school names committee; some you know historical tribal perspectives on the name changes of certain schools or naming new schools like Nespoli and Mission Valley. Like the changing of Discovery Park to Kunyang Park that has been the role of kind of behind for some reason some are Naji who was the one who invited in Commissioners from the HRC to participate in the school names committee. He is no longer the in the leadership in a leadership position on school names and all of a sudden, the communication between school names and myself completely disappeared. I have not heard anything, I've not been invited there's currently are currently in the process of renaming clay elementary school and I have not been a part of that process at all we have had several members of the community approach Kannappan about renaming Kit Carson Elementary School because of the harm that was caused to local Kumai communities; obviously whenever there's a community that is harmed, we want to promote healing for the harmed community. I'm just very concerned about a the lack of transparency of physical names committee at this time because they're not communicating either with our HRC or with the community. There have been complaints from the community to Kanakan asking if we have received any as at the Kanakan collision has received any communication principally names committee which we have not there have been community members who want to know after Clay Elementary has some kind of resolution or have arrived at an alternative name where does Kit Carson fall on the priority of discussion. Also where do the Claremont High School Chieftains fall on their priority, because, we do have indigenous students that are attending these schools and these students want to address these issues and want to have further discussion but they don't feel like the current school names committee is listening to their concerns. I gave my word that I would bring that to the Human Relations Commission and let you all know.

I haven't seen Commissioner Ramirez at recent meetings with the school names committee so if they don't have capacity to attend if someone else might want to join us maybe swap in and out with Commissioner Ramirez.

Item 13: Adjournment

Chair Thomas asked for a motion to adjourn – Commissioner Trabuco made the first motion and seconded by Commissioner Detsky-Weil. A voice vote of all the commissioners and all were in favor.