

Date: June 19, 2020

To: Thomas B. Modica, City Manager *T.M.*

From: Kelly Colopy, Director of Health and Human Services *CC*

For: Mayor and Members of the City Council

Subject: **Human Relations Commission Recommendation**

As specified by the Long Beach Municipal Code, Section 2.44.040, the Human Relations Commission for the City submits the attached recommendation.

This recommendation was approved by the Human Relations Commission at their regularly scheduled meeting of June 3, 2020.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (562) 570-4016.

ATTACHMENT

CC: CHARLES PARKIN, CITY ATTORNEY
DOUGLAS P. HAUBERT, CITY PROSECUTOR
LAURA L. DOUD, CITY AUDITOR
LINDA TATUM, ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER
KEVIN JACKSON, DEPUTY CITY MANAGER
TERESA CHANDLER, DEPUTY CITY MANAGER
REBECCA G. GARNER, ADMINISTRATIVE DEPUTY CITY MANAGER
MONIQUE DE LA GARZA, CITY CLERK
DEPARTMENT HEADS

**CITY OF LONG BEACH
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION**

Shefali Mistry, Chair
Amy Eriksen, Vice Chair
LaDawn Best, Commissioner
Roman Seano, Commissioner
Chanel Smith, Member



Rohida Khan, Commissioner
Elisa Buchanan, Commissioner
Alyssa Gutierrez, Commissioner
Zoe Nicholson, Commissioner

June 4, 2020

Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
City of Long Beach
411 W. Ocean Boulevard, 11th Floor
Long Beach, CA 90802

RE: Public Comment During City Council and Commission Meetings and Participation in Video Conferencing of City Council Meetings

Honorable Mayor Garcia, Members of Long Beach City Council, and City Manager Tom Modica

The purpose and function of the Human Relations Commission is to “promote full acceptance of all citizens in the community in all aspects of community life, to recommend to city council measures, including legislation, which will serve to improve positive human relations and the elimination of discriminatory practices, and to enhance and improve mutual understanding and respect for all citizens of the community.” It is in this context that the Human Relations Commission submits this recommendation with a hope and vision of Long Beach where our city continues to embrace values of justice, equity, respect and dignity for all its residents.

The City of Long Beach and the country are navigating unprecedented times in contending with a global pandemic that is also accelerating the impending economic recession, and now is confronted with uprisings resulting from systemic racism and unchecked abuse of power by law enforcement. The Long Beach Human Relations Commission members have been approached, participated in public protests, read or seen in the media, and observed on social media that residents have numerous concerns, which include, but are not limited to:

- Access to health services
- Job loss due to closed businesses
- Childcare needs
- Requesting the City’s acknowledgement of historic and current structural racism, its effect on residents, and a commitment to action
- Law enforcement: Police brutality, abuse of power, and incitement of violence
- Public safety during community protests
- Curfews and infringement of first amendment rights

In these times, it is all the more important that the public have access to their leadership. Because of this, we are urging change in two specific areas as it pertains to the City Council and commission meetings:

1) Public comment during City Council and commission meetings

While there are difficulties in conducting meetings virtually, it is at this time more than ever that we should be making every effort to hear the public. It has been observed that there is no opportunity for live public comment at our virtual city council meetings. Although the public may submit comments through Legistar, they are not even read aloud, and the public is not able to hear these comments in real time. Other large public entities, including the County of Los Angeles, the California State University, and others, have facilitated the public's ability to be heard in real time during their meetings. It is unfortunate that Long Beach has not committed to similar action.

2) Participation in video conferencing of City Council meetings

In addition, it has been observed that Council members are not using the video feature of the conference service and the public are not able to see their elected leadership. This is not just an issue of access but can be perceived as disengagement. As such, it is a valid issue of accountability. The public should be able to see that their Council members and others are present and engaged, whenever possible.

We appreciate the leadership of our elected and appointed officials and urge the City of Long Beach to adopt these recommendations.

Respectfully,

Shefali Mistry, Chair
Human Relations Commission