

**CITY OF WEST HOLLYWOOD
LGBTQ+ COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2024 – 7:00 P.M.

**WEST HOLLYWOOD CITY HALL
1ST FLOOR – COMMUNITY MEETING ROOM
8300 SANTA MONICA BOULEVARD, WEST HOLLYWOOD CA 90069**

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Whittington called the meeting to order at 7:06 pm

A. LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT:

Read by Chair Whittington

“The West Hollywood LGBTQ+ Commission acknowledges that the land on which we gather and that is currently known as the City of West Hollywood is the occupied, unceded, seized territory of the Gabrieleño Tongva and Gabrieleño Kizh peoples.”

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner Sotile led the Pledge of Allegiance.

C. ROLL CALL

Present Commissioner Ron Cortes
Commissioner Chiedu Egbuniwe
Commissioner Renee F. Sotile
Commission Chair Amber Whittington

Absent: Commissioner Shane Ivan Nash
Commissioner Michael Roberts
Commission Vice Chair Alec White

Also Present: Community & Legislative Affairs Manager Andi Lovano
Recording Secretary Moya Márquez

D. APPROVAL OF THE NOVEMBER 14, 2024, AGENDA

The Commission was asked to approve the November 14, 2024, Meeting Agenda as posted.

ACTION: Approval of the November 14, 2024, Agenda as posted was motioned by Commissioner Egbuniwe, seconded by Commissioner Cortes, and approved unanimously.

E. APPROVAL OF THE OCTOBER 10, 2024 MINUTES

The Commission was asked to approve the October 10, 2024 Meeting Minutes.

ACTION: Approval of the October 10, 2024, meeting minutes was **motioned by Commissioner Egbuniwe seconded by Commissioner Sotile, and approved unanimously.**

F. PUBLIC COMMENT

CARLOS SOSA, LOS ANGELES, executive director of the C.I.T.Y. x1 Youth Group, thanked the Commission for their support of their annual thanksgiving event, which feeds at-risk LGBTQ+ youth. He shared that the organization will be hosting a "Tamale Wars" holiday event on December 8th in Plummer Park from 6pm-9pm, and encouraged the Commission to attend. Finally, he also promoted his organization's new initiative Santa Paws, which helps youth in need of safe shelter with pets move into transitional housing alongside their animals.

2. CONSENT CALENDAR

A. RAINBOW KEY AWARDS GUIDELINES

The LGBTQ+ Commission received additional minor revisions to the updated Rainbow Key Award Guidelines, incorporating feedback from the City Attorney.

ACTION: Approved as part of the Consent Calendar, **motioned by Commissioner Cortes, seconded by Commissioner Whittington, and approved unanimously.**

3. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. RAINBOW KEY AWARDS – 2024 AWARD CEREMONY

The LGBTQ+ Commission received an update from the Rainbow Key Awards subcommittee and/or staff on the 2024 Rainbow Key Awards Ceremony.

Commissioner Egbuniwe reported that the subcommittee met earlier in the day and that the budget for Rainbow Keys has been increased to \$9,600. He shared some ideas from the Subcommittee such as using the additional funds to bring bigger talent to the event. The Subcommittee also shared ideas like closing the autocourt, increasing the quality of the food during the reception, and having a step and repeat.

Commissioner Cortes suggested keeping the event brief.

Commissioner Whittington recommended hosting the reception after the event.

Finally, the Commission decided to start divvying up the award presentation. Commissioner Cortes wanted to present to either Brian Sonia-Wallace or LZ Love. Commissioner Sotile wanted to present to Vivian “Dapper Dyke” and Commissioner Egbuniwe requested to present to Jackie Beat.

ACTION: None. Received updates and discussed the 2024 Rainbow Key Awards Ceremony.

4. NEW BUSINESS

A. PRESERVING LGBTQ+ HISTORY

The LGBTQ+ Commission received a presentation from the Lavender Effect on their mission-driven work/programming, including the Young City at War Exhibit.

Andy Sacher, founder of the Lavendar Effect, spoke to the Commission. He presented the history of the Lavendar Effect and explained a story about how, upon designing their first exhibit, the Lavender Effect realized that there was a lack of recorded stories of contemporary LGBTQ history and culture. As such, the Lavendar Effect began recording oral histories of the queer community, both of the queer community at large, and also of specific locations and times, such as the history of West Hollywood during the height of the AIDS epidemic.

The Lavender Effect is also working on new exhibits including one showcasing the oral histories collected as part of West Hollywood’s 40th anniversary. The exhibit opens on December 1st and will run for at least 6 months in WeHo Park, under the grand staircase.

ACTION: None. Received the presentation.

B. RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR RECENT IMMIGRANTS AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

The LGBTQ+ Commission received and reviewed information about current resources available for immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers from the countries of the former Soviet Union, including members of the LGBTQI+ community, and was asked to provide input and recommendations on addressing any service gaps that may exist.

Michelle Liberman and Dee’Ana Saunders, Human Services Department, presented on the history of immigration to West Hollywood from countries of the former Soviet Union. Michelle spoke about recent developments in Russia that have made LBGTQ+ life there difficult and dangerous.

Dee’Ana Saunders shared that 1 of 4 social service recipients in WeHo are Russian speaking. She shared that Human Services staff was visiting the

meeting to ask questions to identify gaps in programming and services for asylum seekers and refugees, specifically for those that affect LGBTQ+ immigrant/refugee/asylum seekers.

When asked what the most crucial support an LGBTQ+ immigrant can receive - the Commission responded housing, translation services from someone who is also LGBTQ+, food, a case worker, legal support, toiletries, access to transportation, clothing, call center for compassion/someone to talk to, technological support, phones, computer lab, and employment placement with preferably everything in landing page or in printed format.

When asked where they believe gaps exist in services for LGBTQ asylum seekers – the Commission generally responded with case management and education.

The Commission suggested training current social workers on current resources available for specific communities. They also suggested trainings for LGBTQ+ immigrants that can involve self-defense and 'know your rights' training.

ACTIONS: None. Received presentation and made comments.

C. LEGISLATIVE SUBCOMMITTEE

The Commission asked to move this discussion to the next meeting.

ACTION: Approval of moving this discussion to the December 2024 meeting motioned by **Commissioner Egbuniwe, seconded by Commissioner Cortes and approved unanimously.**

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

6. ITEMS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Cortes asked to adjourn in memory of Patrick Blood. He spoke about Patrick's life, and shared how Patrick helped him understand the importance of the Commission.

Commissioner Egbuniwe also asked to adjourn in memory of Patrick Blood and encouraged people to reach out to those who are struggling.

Commissioner Sotile also asked to adjourn in memory of Patrick Blood. She also shared that she attended the Disability Advisory Award and the Bi+ Visibility Day event, but that the latter was poorly attended, even with all the organizations present. She suggested that the Commission could discuss perhaps moving

towards a new format for Bi+ Visibility Day. She also shared a story about helping West Hollywood cats.

Chair Whittington also asked to adjourn the meeting in memory of Patrick Blood. She also shared some trans events taking place in the City. She also shared resources about LGBTQ+ therapy.

7. ITEMS FROM STAFF

A. LGBTQ+ Commission Workplan

The Commission received updates from staff on the 2024-25 Commission Workplan, including information about upcoming presentations (with firm dates to be determined) from various City divisions on workplan items that the Commission suggested.

B. LGBTQ+ Commission December Meeting

The Commission discussed rescheduling their next meeting, scheduled for December 12, 2024, to alternatively occur on December 5, 2024.

ACTION: Approval of rescheduling the December 12, 2024, meeting to December 5, 2024 was **motioned by Commissioner Whittington, seconded by Commissioner Sotile and approved unanimously.**


8. ADJOURNMENT

The LGBTQ+ Commission adjourned in memory of Patrick Blood at 9:01pm to its special meeting on Thursday, December 5, 2024, at 7:00 p.m. to be held in West Hollywood Plummer Park – Rooms 5 & 6 at 7377 Santa Monica Boulevard, West Hollywood, CA 90046.

APPROVED BY A MOTION OF THE LGBTQ+ COMMISSION ON THIS 5th DAY OF DECEMBER 2024.



Amber Whittington | Commission Chair



Moya Márquez | Recording Secretary