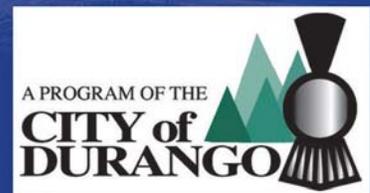




Annual Report

2015

Annual Report of the Durango Community Relations Commission



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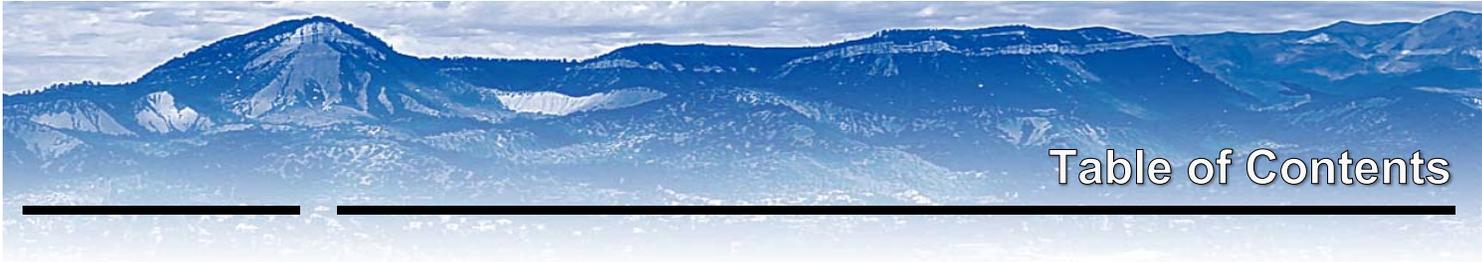


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CRC Mission:

“To encourage social harmony among residents and visitors through education and conflict resolution, to promote responsible actions, positive examples of mutual respect and inclusive community participation.”

To Our Community

Who we are

The Durango City Council created the Community Relations Commission in 2012 with the passage of R-2012-26. We are citizens of this community who are interested in promoting diversity and social harmony. There are five members of the commission, as well as a youth member from the City’s Youth Engagement Program.

Bill Bolden -Appointed 10-16-2012, Reappointed 1-31-2014, Term Expires 1-31-2017

Crystal Harris - Appointed 7-2-2013, Reappointed 1-31-2014, Term Expires 1-31-2016

Sara Hildebrand - Appointed 2-10-2015, Term Expires 1-31-2018

Charles Spence - Appointed 11-5-2012, Reappointed 1-31-2014, Term Expires 1-31-2016

Nancy Stoffer - Appointed 10-16-2012, Reappointed 1-31-2014, Term Expires 1-31-2016

Ellie Gervais, Youth Appointee - Appointed 4-29-15, Term Expires 7-31-2016

What we do

We listen, track the pulse of the community, and encourage positive community dialogue and participation.

When we meet

The Community Relations Commission meets on the 4th Wednesday of each month at 4:00.

Where we meet

CRC meetings are held at City Hall, 949 East 2nd Avenue. All meetings are open to the public.

Visit us in person or online at www.durangogov.org go to Boards and Commissions, Community Relations Commission tab.

Message from the Chair

As the chair of the Community Relations Commission (CRC), I am pleased to present our 2015 annual report to the City Council for review. The Commission remains committed to its advisory role to City Council and to promoting and sustaining social harmony within the City of Durango, for residents and visitors.

Our efforts this past year enabled us to achieve the following highlighted goals:

- 1) The Vice-Chair, Nancy Stoffer and I reached out and connected with the City of Farmington's Community Relations Commission. We have begun to precipitate interest in a regional gathering of potential CRC interests, in hopes of creating opportunities to engage surrounding communities.
- 2) Our youth and community engagement charge was successfully executed with a meaningful "Diversity Dialogue V" workshop for Durango area residents. We collaborated in partnership with the Embracing Diversity Initiative (EDI), Prejudice Elimination Action Team (P.E.A.T.) at Durango High School, El Centro de Mucho Colores and Common Ground at Fort Lewis College and Celebrating Healthy Communities to create an intergenerational multi-cultural experience for participants.
- 3) Our most enjoyable efforts, once again involved actual "in-person" surveys of City residents and visitors during the "Taste of Durango", the Saturday "Farmers Market", and this year, as volunteers, at the Project Merry Christmas gift wrapping booth.
- 4) Lastly, our monthly meetings have been attended by local organizations and civic operations within the City of Durango which share in our vision and efforts for a healthy, tolerant, caring, and engaged Durango community.

The CRC in January of 2016 bid farewell to Commission members Crystal Harris and Sara Hildebrand, and I thank them for their time and efforts. We look forward to sustaining the Commission's momentum and heightening the interest in our work by Durango residents and organizations.

I thank, you, the City of Durango City Council, for your support and interest.

Sincerely,

/s/ Bill Bolden, Chair

Community Relations Commission

2015 Work Plan Summary

January

Bliss Bruen, Coordinator of the Durango Community Cinema Project (Rocky Mountain PBS), invited the CRC to play a partnership role on the documentary screening of “American Denial”. The documentary examines race relations in the United States. CRC members agreed to participate and initiate conversation at the discussion panel held after the event February 17, 2015.

Guests/Members of Public at January CRC meeting:

- 1) Sobie Hamlin with Durango High School’s Prejudice Elimination Action Team (PEAT) informed CRC members that “Diversity Week” at DHS will be February 23-27th. “Diversity Week” is part of the *No Place for Hate Campaign*. CRC acknowledged PEAT’s work with middle and high school students and also suggested PEAT work with the Mayor’s Youth Advisory Commission to help with additional outreach for more youth participation.
- 2) Ellinda McKinney with the Southwest Center for Independence reported that she has started a People of Color support group. She noted that it is an informal gathering and the group meets on Thursday’s from 3:00-6:00 p.m. at Durango Joe’s on College. She invited CRC members to attend.
- 3) Lauren Patterson with Embracing Diversity Initiative (EDI) presented to CRC the various themes EDI is considering for the upcoming “Diversity Dialogue.” CRC members agreed to participate in the program scheduled for March 14, 2015 at the Durango Public Library.
- 4) Danny Quinlan, the new executive director of Compañeros, updated the CRC on local immigrant issues. (Compañeros is the local resource for immigrant outreach in the Four Corners). Quinlan reported on the impact of reduced funding for the Colorado Road and Community Safety Act (SB13-251). The Act was passed to insure drivers are licensed and insured, and it also allows for illegal immigrants to get a driver’s license. Quinlan reported that office closures will impact Durango area applicants who may have to wait up to a year to get a driver’s license and travel long distances because there are no nearby offices. Quinlan also reported that Compañeros plans to host a representative of the Mexican Consulate to come to Durango to help update passports.

CRC recognized Quinlan for his work in helping create and write the resolution establishing the Durango Community Relations Commission.

February

New Commission Member announced

CRC welcomes new Commission Member Sara Hildebrand. She joined the CRC as an attorney and works in the public defender's office. At the University of Denver law School, Hildebrand served as president of the LGBTQI Law Students Group as a third year student and as a research assistant for the Dean of Diversity and Inclusiveness at the school. She currently represents indigent clients.

Guest/Members of Public at February CRC meeting

1) Dave Rich with the Durango Unitarian Church, wanted to alert CRC members to a trial on April 7, 2015 in District Court at the La Plata County Courthouse involving two members of the community regarding alleged racial slurs.

Rich also commented that he was part of the original group which helped establish a human relations group in Durango; he said at that time it was called Durango "Grass Roots".

2) Mary Beth Miles, Assistant to the City Manager, unveiled the City of Durango's new Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics Policy to the CRC. All City Officials, which include Boards and Commission members, as well as representatives of the City are required to be familiar with the City's new policy. The new policy also established a Board of Ethics which comprised of five at large community members.

Miles, who also is a staff liaison to the Mayor's Youth Advisory Commission and Youth Engagement program, invited the CRC to attend the MYAC meetings held on the first Monday at 3:30 p.m. at City Hall.

CRC Community Outreach Events

1) Vice-Chair Stoffer reported that about 75 people attended the Durango Community Cinema Project screening of "American Denial" held on February 17, 2015, at the Durango Public Library. Stoffer took part in the discussion panel where the conversation centered on how to speak to people who are in a place of denial.

2) CRC decided it will facilitate the “Here I stand” exercise at the “Diversity Dialogue” and Chairperson Bolden asked Commission members to review and identify questions for the exercise.

March

March CRC Guest:

Kelly Quach with the Durango Education Center updated Commission members regarding planning for the April 11th Multicultural Fair. Quach said this event is to provide outreach to the community about the GED and English classes offered by the Center. She said proceeds from this event go toward the English classes. Quach also reported that the Center was able to get a community grant from Alpine Bank, which helped with advertising the event in The Durango Herald.

There was further discussion on ideas for including/encouraging more youth participants in events and leadership roles. Possible outreach to Boys and Girls Club and the SOS Outreach. Chairperson Bolden introduced the SOS Outreach program at the meeting. SOS Outreach is a non-profit group that encourages at risk students to set and achieve goals. It utilizes adventures sports to engage students. CRC to consider inviting SOS Outreach to a future meeting.

April

In response to questions about the City donating to various causes, Chairperson Bolden reported on the process for non-profit organizations who inquire about financial support from the CRC. Mr. Bolden said that the City donates to the Human Services Block Grant and then the United Way decides how to distribute the funds.

CRC to partner the “Diversity Dialogue VI” which is a program run by Embracing Diversity Initiative (EDI)

Commission members decided they would like to submit a budget request for the 2016 City budget to sponsor and participate in this event.

CRC Community Outreach Events

“Diversity Dialogue V”, March 14, 2015. Vice-Chair Stoffer reported that she liked the format for questions the CRC used this year at the event.

She remarked that comments from the event were more positive this year.

Youth Expo, April 6, 2015. Vice-Chair Stoffer and Commissioner Hildebrand observed that there was not a lot of diversity among the students that attended the Youth Expo. They reported that comments were made about the Trolley Fare, college expenses and finding acceptance in the high school community as some of the issues presented.

Multicultural Fair, April 11, 2015. Commissioners Harris and Spence reported that their findings from the questions asked at the fair which were very similar to what has been reported at other events in the CRC has participated in. The issues identified by the Commissioners regarded economics, high commercial rents and housing prices.

May

CRC May Guest

Lauren Patterson with EDI and Maria Gonzales with PEAT were in attendance. Chairperson Bolden announced that the CRC would like to assist and partner to help fund future “Diversity Dialogues”. Bolden presents idea to expand Diversity Dialogue session to include an afternoon session.

CRC Meets Farmington’s Community Relations Commission

Chairperson Bolden and Vice-Chair Stoffer reported on a successful meeting with the Farmington Community Relations Commission in April. Stoffer stated that Farmington refers to itself as a Border town because of its geographic proximity to the Navajo Nation. Stoffer described a program that was initiated in Farmington by its CRC called Civility First (Four Corners Great Service Program) This program is ...“designed to promote community, elevate customer/business appreciation and to celebrate unity within diversity....”She also shared other materials in use by the Farmington CRC.

Chairperson Bolden shared a copy of the (2010) Memorandum of Agreement between the Navajo Nation and the City of Farmington, New Mexico about assessing race relations in that community.

CRC Community Outreach - Taste of Durango

Commission members reported that the *survey answers from the 2015 Taste of Durango were similar to other responses they have heard during their outreach.

June

CRC June Guest

La Plata County Judge Martha Minot informed the Commission that she is the Judge for the Drug and Behavioral Health Court offered in the 6th Judicial District. She stated that these specialty courts offer alternatives to traditional incarceration. She reported that the La Plata County Drug Court was established in 2001 as one of the first Colorado Drug Courts and the program consists of three phases. According to Judge Minot the successful candidate can complete Drug Court in 90 days. Statistics show that La Plata County Drug Court has experienced a 73% overall graduation rate.

Minot reported that there are approximately 166 Drug courts in Colorado. She also shared with Commissioners that finding housing and jobs for those in the programs can be a challenge.

Commissioner Hildebrand reported that on a recent trip to Denver visited the St. Francis Homeless Shelter. The shelter offers transitional housing and basic services for those in need of refuge. She offered this as an example as to what some other Colorado Communities are doing to assist the homeless.

Staff reported that the City of Durango kicked off its first Homeless Coalition meeting, Monday June 8th 2015. The Homeless Coalition is comprised of about 30 community participants from a variety of organizations within the City of Durango.

July

CRC July Guests

Cody Goss and Rebecca Carmichael with Celebrating Healthy Communities presented to the CRC. The mission of Celebrating Healthy Communities Coalition is to provide and help build assets and promote addiction free lifestyles in our community, the Coalition is in its 23rd year. Goss presented to the CRC the La Plata Children, Youth & Family Master Plan assessment results. The survey asks local youth how many of the 40 Development Assets they perceive themselves to have. Goss reported that youth with the most designated assets are less likely to engage in high risk behavior. Goss reviewed some of the higher scoring assets with the CRC, which included: Family support; Achievement motivation; Integrity; and Positive view of personal future. Goss also reported that the Coalition will work in areas with lower scoring

assets such as how the community values youth and adult role models, which scored on the low end.

Chairperson Bolden reported that he met with City Manager Ron LeBlanc and CRC staff liaison Suzanne Sitter on July 2, 2015 to discuss items that the CRC would like to propose for the 2016 Commission budget. Events that are being considered for funding are the “Diversity Dialogue” and a Regional Roundtable hosted by the CRC and potential guest speaker Kit Chalberg, with the U.S. Department of Justice.

August

CRC August Guest

Danny Quinlan, the Executive Director of Compãneros was in attendance. Quinlan invited the CRC to the Mexican Independence Day celebration, September 11, 2015, at the American Legion Hall in Durango. The event, which is hosted by Compãneros, is a fundraiser for the organization. Staff offered to place flyers in City Hall to help promote the event.

CRC members asked Quinlan to update them on the issuance of driver’s licenses to undocumented immigrants in the Durango community. Quinlan responded that nothing has changed and that Denver remains one of the few places for getting an appointment and processing driver’s licenses for undocumented immigrants. He stated that if an applicant’s paperwork is not in order many lose their appointment after making the long trip. Quinlan added that the distance and having to reschedule is frustrating.

CRC Breakfast with City Council

CRC met with City Council August 13, 2015, at Carver’s for breakfast to report on Commission accomplishments to date and to discuss community topics.

CRC Community Outreach - Farmer’s Market

CRC reported that 53 residents and visitors were surveyed at Durango Farmer’s Market, August 22, 2015. The survey results showed that a majority of the participants said they like Durango’s friendly vibe, beauty, community events, and the outdoors. Participants also expressed some of the challenges facing Durango, which included comments about the cost of living, real estate prices and now concerns about the health of the Animas River due to the Gold King Mine Spill.

September

“Diversity Dialogue VI” Program. Bolden announced a target date of March 19, 2016 for the event and he suggested the subtitle for the Dialogue would be: “Conversations on the Everyday Experience in Durango, Colorado.” He reported that last year there were 42 participants and this year the target number is 50-75 participants. He specified it will be an opportunity to learn with various interactive activities facilitated by the CRC, EDI and 9-R School District’s Prejudice Elimination Action Team (PEAT). Bolden reported the group identified potential sponsors to reach out to and an invite list which included area agencies, organizations, schools, fire and police departments, and City Council, among others.

CRC September Guest: Farmington Community Relations Commission

Discussion regarding Durango hosting a Regional Roundtable for surrounding area Community Relations Commissions and other communities that are considering creating a commission is proposed. Farmington CRC member Lynn Love and others supported the idea. Love stated that generating an overall positive message that transcends cities (communities) is very important.

Bolden said that he would work with staff and Commission members to explore meeting dates, community invites and topic ideas.

Both Commissions shared information about their respective outreach groups. Chair Bolden informed the group that Durango’s CRC serves in an advisory capacity and helps gauge the climate in the community with reports to City Council. Love highlighted some of the events Farmington’s CRC participates in such as Hispanic Heritage Month, Black History Month and outreach with the Navajo Nation.

Farmington CRC member, Cathryn Abeyta, commented that in her community she believes there are still old wounds and that it can be difficult to tip the comfort level often needed to allow people to move forward. Love shared information about Farmington’s Four Corners Civility First program, which was established in 2008. He stated that the program is a commitment to the community to help improve relationships by recognizing and promoting healthy and diverse relationships within the business community. He identified the ten traits of civility listed in the program which include: citizenship, compassion, consideration, courtesy, inclusiveness, kindness, respect, responsibility, sincerity, and tolerance. Love said that businesses can participate in the program and are highlighted in the Farmington community when they provide outstanding service. Love also mentioned that their CRC is always exploring different marketing to advertise and promote.

Both CRC's discussed homelessness and panhandling issues in Durango and Farmington. Love stated the San Juan County Partnership Housing Assistance Program sees about 15 to 20 families on their intake days. He stated federal, state and local funds help support this program. Joanna Oliver, staff liaison with the City of Farmington, reported that Farmington's homeless shelter is a dry shelter but during the winter months it becomes a wet shelter. Durango Commissioner Harris informed the group that there are over 300 non-profits in Durango. Harris believes that the programs don't always get the positive coverage needed in the community. Harris stated that Durango's Detox Unit (part of Axis Health System Inc.) serves as a winter shelter because the City's shelter is a dry shelter.

City staff informed the Commission members about the Durango Homeless Coalition, which has been organized by the City to further address the needs of the homeless. Finding and being able to offer affordable housing was also brought up as a continued concern among commission members.

October

CRC October Guest

Ellinda McKinney with the Southwest Center for Independence and founder of a Durango group called "People of Color" asked the CRC for ideas on creating a mentoring resource guide to include people of color to be used for youth who live and work in the Durango community. CRC members were supportive of the idea but also mentioned the difficulty in compiling such a list and getting personal information released and distributed.

Chairperson Bolden met with PEAT and EDI in October 15, 2015 to continue planning for the 2016 "Diversity Dialogue". Bolden reported the group would like to use a similar format as last year for the Dialogue workshop. He also announced that Cody Goss, with Celebrating Healthy Communities Coalition, had suggested everyone attending the workshop bring a canned food item which would be donated to one of the local food banks. Bolden stated that he has been talking with Zia's restaurant about possibly providing some of the food for Dialogue participants.

Vice-Chair Stoffer stated that she has been in discussion with Ruthie Edd, the former chair of Real History of the Americas Day at Fort Lewis College, about creating a resolution for the CRC to support and present to City Council about recognizing Indigenous Peoples' Day, as the second Monday in October (traditionally celebrated as Columbus Day). CRC members were in favor of the idea and would like to look into the process of drafting a resolution to bring before City Council.

November

CRC November Guests

La Plata County Sheriff Sean Smith

Sheriff Smith provided an in-depth overview of his experience and his work to ensure that his agency is reflective of the community that it serves. He reviewed several key initiatives he has instituted to change the way in which the Sherriff's office provides services to the community. These efforts include: (1) revamping their recruitment strategy to diversify the organization, (2) providing cultural sensitivity training, (3) instituting a service first mentality, (4) focusing community policing efforts on community engagement and community partnerships, and (5) emphasizing servant leadership.

The Commission asked Sherriff Smith to elaborate on an incident involving The Durango Herald and Sherriff's Deputies where inappropriate misogynistic remarks were made toward a female reporter. The incident occurred earlier this year. Sherriff Smith indicated that the incident was indicative of past culture of the organization. He provided an overview of the actions he has taken to remedy the issues, including working with a local non-profit to provide training for departmental staff.

Sherriff Smith concluded by reinforcing that community outreach is one of the core services provided by the Sheriff's department. This is an area he will be focusing on over the coming months, while working to revamp and reestablish partnerships with a range of community organizations.

Fort Lewis College Student Ruthie Edd

Chairman Bolden introduced Ruthie Edd, a Fort Lewis College Senior. Ms. Edd shared her background with the Commission. She has helped coordinate the 8th Annual Real History of the Americas Event, which takes place annually on Columbus Day (second Monday of October). Ms. Edd shared a proposed resolution with the Commission that would recognize the second Monday in October as "Indigenous Peoples' Day" in the City of Durango to celebrate the contributions, the enduring culture and traditions of all Native Americans and Indigenous People.

Ms. Edd elaborated on her research from other communities. Although most of the other resolutions include language regarding Columbus Day, Ms. Edd opted to not include a reference to Columbus Day not to devalue its purpose, but rather to further celebrate "Indigenous Peoples' Day". These edits were included in the draft version of the resolution that was presented to the Commission.

The Commission will target January or February for City Council Adoption, and would like Ms. Edd to be present when Council considers the Resolution.

Regional Roundtable Discussion. Commissioner Harris asked if the event would be hosted in partnership with the Farmington CRC. Mr. LeBlanc clarified that none of the communities on the list have CRCs except Farmington.

The letter to the regional communities will be postponed pending a future presentation to the Southwest Colorado Council of Governments (SWCCOG). Chairman Bolden will contact Councilor White to confirm the CRC's presence and participation at the upcoming SWCCOG meeting.

The Commission discussed the post card that is intended to recognize community members for their valuable contributions. Several members provided comments and feedback. The Commission agreed on the revised version of the card.

December

In lieu of a regular meeting, the CRC volunteered at the Project Merry Christmas Gift Wrapping both at the Durango Mall.

** Note: Survey results, resolutions, bylaws, and brochures are located on the City of Durango's website under Boards and Commissions, Community Relations Commission tab.*

Goals for 2016

- To encourage more multi-cultural experiences for youth working groups at a peer-to-peer level.
- Encourage civic engagement with all sectors of the community.
- Form partnerships with other area Community or Human Relations Commissions; exploring a Regional Roundtable in Durango.
- Make ourselves more available at local events to “talk” with Durango community residents.
- Continue to invite Durango community organizations and civic programs to share their success and short comings during our public comment portion.

CRC SPOTLIGHT



RUTHIE EDD

Ya'at'eeh (hello),

This year's CRC Spotlight features Fort Lewis College student leader Ruthie Edd. A Dine' (Navajo) woman, Ruthie identifies her clans as Zia, Redhouse, Bitterwater, and Manygoats; in that order. As a 2012 graduate of Durango High School, Ruthie notes that she grew up in Durango, Colorado and the surrounding areas. She, presently, is a senior at FLC studying Native American and Indigenous studies and will graduate in December 2016.

Regarding her life in Durango she says, "Durango is close to my heart because it is my hometown and homeland as a Dine' person. I am invested in seeing the town prosper, so I try to be involved by engaging the community, connecting with the public schools, and providing a platform for Native perspectives and concerns".

Among her personal philosophies, she believes artistic expression, education, and personal reflection are key components of creating an empathetic and understanding community. Ruthie lives with intention to support and cultivate these qualities in her personal life, on campus, in Durango, and in the greater Four Corners area.

The recently approved City of Durango resolution to recognize "Indigenous Peoples' Day" on the second Monday in October was crafted and introduced to the Community Relations Commission by Ms. Edd.