



VICE MAYOR  
**REX**  
RICHARDSON

**R-17**

**Date:** January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021

**To:** Honorable Mayor Robert Garcia and Members of the City Council

**From:** Vice Mayor Rex Richardson, Ninth District  
Councilmember Mary Zendejas, First District  
Councilmember Cindy Allen, Second District  
Councilmember Suely Saro, Sixth District

**Subject:** Long Beach Equity Commission

---

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Direct the City Manager to work with the Human Relations Commission to update and expand its mission and scope, and change its title to the Long Beach Equity Commission, in line with recommendations from the Racial Equity and Reconciliation Initial Report, and return to the City Council within 90 days.

**Discussion**

The city of Long Beach is the 36th largest city in the United States and amongst the most racially diverse cities in the nation. It is also economically and socially diverse, with deep economic and health disparities amongst its residents.

To better address these disparities, in recent years, the City of Long Beach has become an emerging leader in efforts to institutionalize equity at the local government level. The City has participated in national capacity building programs, including the Governing Alliance for Racial Equity, as well as the Nation League of Cities, Race, Equity, and Leadership program.

In 2017, in response to a proposal by Vice Mayor Rex Richardson, and unanimously approved by the Long Beach City Council, the City created the Long Beach Office of Equity with the purpose of advancing equity and ensuring that all Long Beach residents have what they need to thrive. The office most recently released the Long Beach Equity Toolkit for city leaders and staff, which provides specific strategies that can be applied across departments to make positive changes through policies, programs and services.

On April 21st, 2020, in the midst of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Long Beach City Council approved a request for the creation of a health equity lens statement on all staff reports



VICE MAYOR  
**REX**  
RICHARDSON

related to COVID-19 impacts and response. This was done in acknowledgement of disproportionately large health impacts on people of color, in particular African Americans.

After the tragic killing of Georgia Floyd by Minneapolis Police Officers, the City of Long Beach implemented the Framework of Reconciliation, a strategy to help the City of Long Beach to address inequities and racial bias in its own systems. This effort culminated in the unanimous adoption of the Racial Equity and Reconciliation Initial Report by the City Council on August 11, 2020 which contained over 100 recommendation. Two recommendations include; reevaluating the role and function of the City's Human Relations Commission, and creating an Equity Commission by shifting the current Human Relations Commission to focus on equity and oversight of the Reconciliation Process.

The Long Beach Human Relations Commission is one of more than 25 authorities, boards, commissions in the City of Long Beach. These commissions play a vital role as community-based entities that bringing transparency, change, and growth to the City of Long Beach. The mission of the Human Relations Commission is to inspire and support social justice and equity in the City of Long Beach fostering foster mutual understanding and respect for all. Its vision is to ensure that Long Beach is a just and equitable community, free of discrimination and violence, where people are valued and have the resources to reach their full potential.

With the breadth of equity work on hand, it is critical to have a citizen commission that will advise the city council and provide accountability and transparency to these efforts. This would be done while maintaining its statutory scope to consider, promote and develop programs for the reduction of tension, conflict, or violence which may arise from intolerance, prejudice and discrimination based upon race, religion, national origin, age, gender sexual orientation or physical or mental disability.

By expanding the scope and title of the Human Relations Commission to the Long Beach Equity Commission, Long Beach will be making transparent and meaningful progress in institutionalizing our commitment to equity and ensuring city policies and programs are designed in a way that ensures all neighborhoods and residents, of all racial, geographic, and social backgrounds, have access, representation, dignity, and an opportunity to thrive.

#### **Fiscal Impact**

Due to time constraints no fiscal analysis was conducted.

#### **Suggested Action**

Approve recommendation.