

LGBTQIA+ Commission Retreat
January 24, 2026. 8:30am-1:30pm
San Mateo County Office of Education, Tree Room
101 Twin Dolphin Drive, Redwood City, CA

RETREAT NOTES

This report summarizes the LGBTQIA+ Commission’s January 24, 2026 retreat. The retreat was facilitated by Debbie Schechter of Schechter Consulting.

Retreat Attendees:

Michael Cooper, Commissioner
Marilyn Hollinger, Commissioner
Jade Howard, Commissioner
Dana Johnson, Co-Chair
Vanessa Lemus-Tapia, Co-Chair
Bismay Mishra, Commissioner (arrived at 10:30am, after vote on agenda)
Fabricio Perez, Commissioner
Christopher Sturken, Commissioner
Sha Sun, Commissioner

Non-Commissioners

Tanya Beat, Commission Liaison
Debbie Schechter, Facilitator
Kalimah Salahuddin, Guest Speaker

Absent:

Dave Crafts, Commissioner
Camille Kennedy, Commissioner
Christina Falla, D2 Staff

Call to Order and Roll Call

Commission Co-Chairs called the meeting to order, read the Land Acknowledgement and conducted Roll Call. There were no public comments.

Approval of Agenda: Mike Cooper motioned to approve. Sha Sun seconded. Approved.

Retreat Goals, Agenda Review, Group Agreements

Debbie Schechter explained that the purpose of the retreat is to strengthen the Commission as a team and develop initial goals for the Commission for the next two years. The objectives of the retreat were to:

- Get to know and connect with each other
- Identify Commission goals, objectives, tasks and responsibilities and create a roadmap/workplan for actionable and measurable goals
- Rebuild and strengthen the ICC
- Identify ways to take care of ourselves and each other

Debbie reviewed the following group agreements:

- Listen for understanding; ask curious questions
- Share the air, step up/step back
- Let the facilitator guide the process needed and we can adjust

- Technology on silent
- Have fun!

Framing Activity/Introductions

Purpose: To get to know each other better and set the tone for the day

Commissioners paired up to share why they joined the Commission and one learning from their time on the Commission. They then introduced their partners and reported out on their responses. Responses are summarized below:

Why Joined the Commission

Be surrounded by queer community in a safe place; resources and advocacy

Get involved in community work; pass resources on

Personal experience; give back to community and younger generation

Represent Asian community

Because of Tanya; bring more support for things like Queer Prom and other issues

Have a bigger impact on the whole County; passionate about issues, represent and welcome Black folks

Care for well-being of the community, give back, meeting Tanya

Advocate for others, give back to the community to provide safety and well-being

One Learning

Importance of allyship, patience, resources

Different perspectives

Journey has ups and downs

Focus on policy and advice

Advising on legislation

Patience

How local government works, how to advocate

How difficult advocacy can be; reaching and listening to the community

Community, patience, and advocacy were identified as common themes from this exercise.

Ways to Connect with Each Other:

Commissioners identified the following ways that they could connect with one another and get to know each other better:

- Social gathering
- Casual events with the public
- Game night at Peninsula Books
- Gathering at Tanya's or someone else's house
- Attending conferences together (ex., youth conferences like OYE, March 28)
- Attend Pride Center events, Coast Pride events; have a meeting at Coast Pride
- Share information with other Commissioners (one way communication)
- Potluck in the park

Guest Speaker: Kalimah Salahuddin spoke to the Commissioners and shared her personal story and motivating remarks about the importance of the Commission's work.

Commission Goal Setting

Purpose: Agree on key Commission goals for 2026-2027 (approximately 3 goals)

Commission Co-Chairs Dana Johnson and Vaness Lemus-Tapia and Staff Liaison Tanya Beat reviewed the three goals that the Commission had previously identified:

- Inclusion Community Campaign: Revise the Inclusion Community Campaign and how to engage with the community
- Sanctuary County: Study and learn an issue such as how to make San Mateo County a LGBTQ+ Sanctuary County
- Community Engagement: Prioritize community engagement and make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors

Commissioners briefly discussed these goals and agreed upon them.

Commission Work Plan Development

Purpose: Develop Commission workplan for 2026-2027

Commissioners broke into three groups to begin to develop a workplan around the three identified goals. They did this work in three rounds, where Commissioners rotated to the other two groups to learn about and contribute to ideas that were identified in previous rounds. They focused on clarifying the goal and the outcome, defining success, identifying a few key activities to support the outcome, and noting any key questions that came up. The groups reported out on their goals, outcomes, activities/actions and key questions. The results are reflected in the attached workplan charts.

Overall themes identified based on the goals were:

1. Widening the circle of community members who are engaged in LGBTQ+ issues and sharing their perspectives
2. Learnings from community engagement will feed into the goals of the Inclusion Community Campaign (and possibly the idea of recommending an LGBTQ+ Office).

Based on the goals identified and the recognition of what the Commission can realistically accomplish, Commissioners agreed to focus on the goals of **Community Engagement and the ICC**. They formed subcommittees to further develop the workplan for these two goals as follows:

Engagement	Inclusion Community Campaign
Jade (Lead) Michael Vanessa Dana Fabricio	Marilyn (Lead) Sha Chris Bismay

*Absent Commissioners who need to choose a committee: Dave Crafts, Camille Kennedy

Supporting and Sustaining Ourselves and Our Work

Purpose: Identify ways to take care of ourselves and each other

Commissioners broke into two groups to discuss the following questions:

- What does care and support look like?
- How can we care for ourselves?
- How can we support each other?
- How can manage/respond to external stresses/events?

The Commission agreed to further discuss the ideas at a future Commission meeting and to focus on how these ideas can be implemented, including whether the Commission wants to develop agreements to support each other.

Steps to Conflict Resolution:

Facilitator Debbie Schechter shared five steps to conflict resolution, as an approach to helping Commissioners address conflicts within the Commission and with others. The five steps are as follows:

1. Pause and cool off
2. Define the problem: practice active listening, use I messages
3. Identify needs: ask questions to understand the need/interest underlying someone's position
4. Brainstorm solutions
5. Create a plan and execute it

Summary and Next Steps

Purpose: Review accomplishments and identify any next steps that need to be completed

Facilitator Debbie Schechter summarized the group's accomplishments. The following next steps were identified:

- Share retreat notes with absent Commissioners (Dana share with Dave, Vanessa share with Cam)
- At a future Commission meeting, review the ideas generated for supporting and sustaining ourselves and our work and identify ways to implement these ideas
- Assign absent members to a subcommittee at the February Commission meeting
- Subcommittees further develop workplans, report out and discuss the workplans at the February and March meetings, vote to adopt the workplan at the April meeting.