

REVIEWED

By City Clerk's Office at 12:22 pm, Jun 01, 2021

Commission on the Status of Women Applicant

Mr David T. Pisarra

Application Date: 05/27/21

Reside in Santa Monica: yes

If yes, number of years: 20+

INTERESTS AND EXPERIENCE

Current or prior service on city boards/commissions:

None

Community activities:

For the past 19 years I have been a regular weekly contributing (unpaid) columnist for the Santa Monica Daily Press, where I have covered myriad topics; such as my annual Domestic Violence Awareness month series, local issues such as Homelessness, City Council politics and the future of the city.

At the national level I worked on the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence Speaker Selection for the 2020 conference.

Previously I have attended the Los Angeles County Domestic Violence Council General Meetings and DV Shelter Directors / Men's Commission / LGBT subcommittees.

I am a past President of the Business Alliance Los Angeles (the first Gay and Lesbian chamber of commerce in Los Angeles) which merged with the West Hollywood Chamber of Commerce.

I have led a business workshop for the Women's Development Center at the Small Business Development Center in Van Nuys.

When I was in the Santa Monica Rotary Club, I was the Editor of the weekly Rotamonica newsletter.

I have been the founding attorney on over a dozen non-profit organizations in the past 20 years.

Qualifications, experience, education, and technical or professional requirements:

As an openly gay male attorney who works in the family court system I regularly confront the social issues that are directly applicable to the COSW, such as domestic violence and its impact on women and

children, gender and diversity issues as they are being exposed in our schools, public works and governmental accommodations.

I am proficient in the Robert's Rules of Order, and was Consigliere on those issues to the National Speakers Association Los Angeles in 2017/2018. My experience running meetings for the Westside Toastmasters, which also meets at the Ken Edwards Center, along with 22 years in courts, has made me an able and comfortable public speaker and meeting runner.

A small sample of my current reading list that is relevant to the COSW would be: SEX SCANDAL by Ashley McGuire, THE DIVERSITY DELUSION by Heather Macdonald, EDUCATED by Tara Westover, WHITE FRAGILITY by Robin J. DiAngelo and USE YOUR DIFFERENCE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE by Tayo Rockson

Areas of demonstrated expertise:

In my role as family law attorney I have confronted the varied needs of domestic abuse survivors as I have represented both men and women in seeking protection through the DVPA (Domestic Violence Prevention Act). To continuously educate myself on the resources available I regularly attended the Los Angeles Domestic Violence Council meetings, I have had 'one on one' meetings with the local shelter directors of Women's Shelter of Long Beach, Valley Oasis and Haven Hills. I have also interviewed (in person) shelter directors in Arkansas and Texas to understand the larger problem.

As a small businessperson I have to be constantly aware of how to present my business to a changing demographic, that demands that I stay up to on both technological issues such as digital marketing but also how that is consumed by differing demographics. I regularly attend marketing and training programs to find new and innovative ways to get a message across to an increasingly online yet isolated population.

Community outreach and involvement is a moving target and there are several new and exciting ways to find volunteers for both surveys to increase knowledge for policy development, to enroll engagement and increase awareness and advocacy.

I have worked with the Children's Institute to Produce/Direct/Write a short film entitled Dadness on the value of fathers in a child's (both boys and girls) lives.

While I was on the board of the Youth Mentoring Connection we produced a live event at the Broad Stage (in Santa Monica) that generated funds for the organization's annual fund.

What a "father's rights" lawyer can bring to the Commission:

I primarily represent men (although about 5-10% of our clients are women in the primary wage earner position) in the family court system. I do this because, just as women need dedicated advocates, so do men, because they are navigating a treacherous terrain that they likely have little to no knowledge of.

Approximately 50-60% of the fathers I represent have daughters, who need to see a positive role model in their male parent and I view my role as helping to foster a healthy co-parenting relationship. I do this while striving to not be blind to the needs of the women and girls in family court. My professional training (which I continue to work on through regular Minimum Continuing Legal Education) gives me the ability to look at issues from as many sides as possible, while recognizing that we all have our inherent biases and prejudices.

In my 20 plus years as a family law attorney I have learned that the best results in family law don't happen in the courtroom, the laws are gender neutral but real life impacts the application of those laws. In general, there is no "win" in family court, just less damage to all. In my work as I try to get to a healthy result for all, including the mother and the child, I do my best to understand the mother's concerns and work to address them and find a healthy result for the family.

I would like to offer my perspective as a male to the commission, and hope that I could bring an alternate viewpoint, to assist in creating more comprehensive and beneficial results for all.

Historically the fight for women's equality has addressed the question of 'How to elevate women without pushing down men, because just reversing the dynamic isn't helpful to anyone' and I think I can help in that struggle.

Goals:

I would like to serve the wider Santa Monica community by contributing to the impact, reach and awareness of the COSW because women's status effects all of society. We cannot hope to improve our community if we keep everyone in silos. The nature of our evolving city is that a greater awareness of diversity is needed and it begins with understanding and improving the status of women. To holistically treat our society ills requires that we take a wider view of what is wrong and I believe that the COSW is in a position to lead that charge.

Vision:

I would like to see the COSW expand its presence by way of social media, and by spearheading joint ventures with both public and private entities to expand the awareness of how, and why, to change and become more inclusive and supportive of the status of women.

Personal Qualities:

I am a small business person who has led non-profit organization committees and projects. As the President of BALA (the first Gay and Lesbian chamber of commerce in Los Angeles) I was responsible for fundraising, communications and member development. The Annual Gala required the production of all aspects of the event, from program book ad sales, to coordinating with the venue for AV. I was in charge of a group of 10 people who pulled off this event successfully.

During my time on the board of the Youth Mentoring Connection I was one of two co-chairs for a major fundraising event held at the Broad Stage. We sold out the event and I was able to work with a committee of 6 people to produce programs, ticket sales, food service, and fundraise.

For my law practice I write, produce, and edit videos for YouTube, podcasts for iTunes, content for Instagram and blog entries. I know how to tell a story and motivate awareness. I believe these skills can be useful to the COSW. I am one of the few Family Law attorneys who has taken advantage of the benefits of online marketing and content production - the COSW has an opportunity to do the same with their mission and purpose.

Will you be able to commit the necessary time to perform your duties if appointed to the board?

yes

How did you learn about the vacancy in this board or commission? (select all that apply)

On the City's website (smgov.net or santamonica.gov)

BUSINESS INFORMATION

Occupation: Attorney

Business name: Pisarra & Grist

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