

Chairperson
Aaron Richman



Members:
Lilian Chukwurah
James Kobialka
Edward G. Robinson
Tracey Weeden

Vice-chairperson
Jacqueline Yang

**City of Worcester
Human Rights Commission**

Clerk
Elizabeth O'Callahan

**Monthly Meeting Summary – Monday, July 1st, 2019, 6pm
Worcester City Hall, Esther Howland Chamber, 3rd Floor, 455 Main St., Worcester, MA**

Present: Lilian Chukwurah, James Kobialka, Aaron Richman, Edward G. Robinson,
Tracey Weeden, Jacqueline Yang

Absent: Elizabeth O'Callahan

Staff: Jayna Turchek

Guests: MA Rep. David LeBoeuf and Asst. Clerk Niko Vangjeli

1. Call to order and introductions

A quorum was established and Chairperson Richman called the meeting to order at 6:08pm. The Chairperson welcomed the guests.

2. Approval of June 6th meeting minutes

Vice-chairperson Yang motioned to approve the minutes as written. Commissioner Robinson seconded. Motion passed with all in favor.

3. New Business – Discussion about the Inactive Voter List Legislation

Chairperson Framing of the Meeting's Events

Chairperson Richman provided an explanation of the interest and importance of the Human Rights Commission being involved and informed of the proposed legislation. Chairperson Richman delegated background information to MA Rep. LeBoeuf.

Background

MA Rep. LeBoeuf defined what it means to be an inactive voter. Chairperson Richman added that the update made to the legislation pertaining to the inactive voter lists and annual street listings survey created a discrepancy as to the period of time municipalities should wait before placing a voter on an inactive voter list. Mr. Vangjeli added that they have to inactivate the voters who fail to respond to the street listing in the same year as the survey, which was guidance received



OFFICE OF HUMAN RIGHTS & DISABILITIES, CITY HALL ROOM 101
455 MAIN ST., WORCESTER, MA 01608
TELEPHONE (508) 799-8486 | FAX (508) 799-1218



by the Secretary of State to remove those voters on an annual basis. MA Rep. LeBoeuf is proposing to change that portion of the current legislation, and they hope that the Human Rights Commission will support the proposed legislation.

Discussion

Chairperson Richman asked for clarification of the bill being a dual problem and how one part can be fixed, while leaving the other unchanged. MA Rep. LeBoeuf discussed how this is the first step towards making sure that individuals are empowered to activate their right to vote. MA Rep. LeBoeuf also discussed about how this first step is one of many that are needed.

Commissioner Weeden asked about voters being removed and their process. Asst. Clerk Niko Vangjeli explained the process. He also noted that if voters vote in the September 2019 election, voters are active in the November 2019 election.

Committeeperson Weeden asked about demographics of inactive voters. Asst. Clerk Niko Vangjeli did not have specific statistics with him. In terms of general demographics of inactive voters, Asst. Clerk Niko Vangjeli said that are a lot of college students who are inactive in municipal elections and then are placed on the inactive list. MA Rep. LeBoeuf commented on how it is a state regulation that restricts gathering specific information—it is difficult to draw conclusions about other demographics because the street listing survey does not require many specifiers beyond name, address, and party affiliation.

The Commission continued to discuss the context of the legislation with Asst. Clerk Niko Vangjeli and MA Rep. LeBoeuf.

After more questions were asked, Chairperson Richman thanked MA Rep. LeBoeuf and Asst. Clerk Niko Vangjeli for attending the meeting and for providing the information to the Commission.

Commissioner Kobialka motioned that the Human Rights Commission demonstrates its support of the legislation and that they distribute the document to other representatives. Committeeperson Robinson seconded the motion for discussion. The motion passed. Committeeperson Kobialka offered to draft a document of support.

Public comment from Christine Tosti and John Finn both commented on the importance to educate and encourage all to vote including persons with disabilities.

Commissioners responded to this comment and noted that it ought to be a topic in future discussions.

Asst. Clerk Niko Vangjeli responded to this comment by discussing how there are early voting locations, which include Worcester Housing buildings. Some universities and locations have limited parking that inhibits them from being central locations.

Chairperson Richman asked about voter turnout statistics. Asst. Clerk Niko Vangjeli responded that there was an increase in voter turnouts due to the early voting. Worcester lacks in the municipal elections, which is something that the Elections Commission is working towards addressing. Asst. Clerk Niko Vangjeli also spoke about the work that candidates are doing to encourage voters to sign nomination papers. When a voter signs a nomination paper is acts to remove them from the inactive voter list if that are on that list.

4. Old Business

A. Reflections on the June Meeting—Worcester Police Department

Chairperson Richman asked members for their thoughts on the presentation from the Police Department. Commissioner Robinson led the reflection by noting that Sgt. Boykin came to the NAACP and reported that he stayed on the job to finish the task, even though he was eligible to retire. The Committee continued to talk about the great work that Sgt. Boykin did on behalf of the Department and city.

Chairperson Richman shifted the conversation to the makeup of the current graduating class. Commissioner Weeden spoke about how she hopes that there is continued transparency in recruitment when it comes to diversity and inclusion. She hopes that more female officers are continued to be recruited. Chairperson Richman agreed that the city needs to do better about having a more diverse police force. Commissioner Yang presented statistics about the seven percent increase in the amount of women of color who are in the police force.

Public comment emphasized importance of education for police officers around mental health and working with marginalized populations.

Chairperson Richman thanked Ms. Tosti for sharing again. Commissioner Robinson suggested contacting the Worcester Police Department's prevention and intervention team to see if intervene before people get arrested. They are starting to see and acknowledged that addiction is more of an illness, and it should be responded to in a new way. He reiterated that he does not know much about the process and that it would be good to hear from the Worcester prevention and intervention team directly. Committeeperson Yang directed the Commission towards places where they can find statistics about every city and every instance of overdose or of abuse. Chairperson Richman suggested raising the question to the intervention team to see their response and feedback.

Chairperson redirected the conversation back towards reflections on the June 1st meeting and the desire to continue to work the Chief as well as finding a better way to with the City Manager. He is going to start having at least an annual meeting to meet with him to get a sense of what his vision for the Commission is, which may give us good insights into what his administration thinks we need.

Commissioner Weeden responded with her support of increased guidance with the City Manager. The Commission continued to talk about its role, responsibility, and relationship with the City Manager.

5. Location of next meeting (Monday August 5th, 2019): City Hall, Esther Howland Chamber

6. Adjournment at 7:47pm