

Chairperson
Aaron Richman



Members:

Lilian Chukwurah
Izaida Gonzalez
Robyn Kennedy
Edward G. Robinson
Elizabeth O'Callahan

Vice-chairperson
Cara Berg Powers

**City of Worcester
Human Rights Commission**

**Monthly Meeting Summary – Monday, November 6th, 2017, 6pm
Worcester City Hall, 4th Floor, 455 Main St., Worcester, MA**

Members Present: Aaron Richman, Cara Berg Powers, Izaida Gonzalez, Edward G. Robinson, Elizabeth O'Callahan
Members Absent: Robyn Kennedy, Lilian Chukwurah
Staff Present: Jayna Turchek, Kathy Esparza, Katherine Calano and Joelle Dumont

1. Call to Order and Introductions

A quorum was established and Chairperson Aaron Richman called the meeting to order at 6:40pm. Commissioners introduced themselves. The Chairperson welcomed the Commissioners and those present.

2. Approval of October 2nd, 2017 meeting minutes

Vice-Chairperson Berg Powers motioned to approve the minutes as written. Commissioner Gonzalez seconded.

3. New Business:

A. Review proposal for 2018 Make Everyday Human Rights Day Observances Campaign

Joelle Dumont, intern with the Office of Human Rights and Disabilities, presented thoughts on the campaign to promote education, collaboration and civic engagement on an ongoing basis to support the work of the Human Rights Commission. Commissioners participated in an activity highlighting potential days for a service or event in the year during a short presentation on the goals and delivery of the campaign.

Three main goals: Education, collaboration and civic engagement

- Collaboration:
 - Collaborate and coordinate with intra office and inter agency events
 - Coalition building and outreach opportunities
 - Promote human rights work for city staff and local agencies
- Education:
 - Build awareness around cultural diversity and social inequities
 - Inform residents how city is addressing human rights issues
- Civic engagement:
 - Call to action against social injustice
 - Actively organize and participate in social change
 - Increase resident involvement in civic functions such as voting



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Potential events:

- A National Night Out could serve to make a connection between community police initiatives and the Black Lives Matter Movement, potentially an open forum
- A mock truth and reconciliation process could be hosted toward the end of March

Delivery - Weekly calendars, event promotions and public service announcements would educate public on history of human rights commission, bring resources to residents and agencies, call attention to social inequities and celebrate cultural diversity.

Weekly/Yearly Calendar of events:

- Distributed online through mailing list. A sample calendar listed events and facts about events, announcements of upcoming Human Rights Events, monthly awareness events information.
- A Yearly Religious Calendar would help increase public awareness

Public Service announcements:

- Monthly or quarterly PSA could include with a simple activity that could be done at home.
- The Commission could invite members of the public to share their experiences about the activity.
- Members of various faiths and/or members of immigrant populations could be included in PSA

Follow Up Questions:

- How can HRC support efforts of faith communities observing these days and align effort further?
- How HRC can continue the work following Joelle's departure in May

4. Old Business:**A. Upcoming observances:**

- Transgender Day of Remembrance- November 20th - 7-9pm Unitarian Universalist Church, 90 Holden Street
- International Human Rights Day – December 10th
- Longest night of the year – December 21st

Katherine Calano, Homeless Projects Manager with the City of Worcester's Department of Health and Human Services spoke on the Longest Night of the Year, also known as National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day, organized by the National Coalition for Homeless and National Health Care of the Homeless Council. This issue is especially important this year in that the unsheltered homeless population has risen significantly for the third year in a row, to 130 counted in January and 135 counted in July 2017. She noted that this number is likely higher, and accurate counts are limited by the number of people available to assist in counting. The Central Mass Housing Alliance provides the counts and can provide updated numbers for next meeting. Responding to Commissioner's questions, Ms. Calano offered to prepare a report on the statistics and systemic causes of homelessness in the city, as well as the city's initiatives and policy priorities.

Paul Therrien representing Community Healthlink on Consumer Advisory Board spoke on carrying out its mission to address and call attention to the issue of homelessness. He spoke on the Longest Night of the Year as a way to also honor those who passed away while homeless or due to past struggles of homelessness, adding "the longest night commemorates people who never had chance to get back out."

A march from Community Healthlink on 162 Chandler Street to Mt Sinai Church will be held at 5:30pm. The march will be followed by a sermon and candlelight vigil. Attendees are invited to light a candle to honor those who have passed away

Current/Potential Initiatives:

Potential project: Replicate the work of a videographer who connects families with loved ones experiencing homelessness.

Ongoing Project: Speaker's forum for consumer advisory board to tell their stories

Follow Up:

What can commission do to support the efforts of those organizing the Longest Night of the Year?

What are the systemic causes of homelessness, and how can the Commission help address these?

Invite community providers and those affected by homelessness to speak at the December HRC meeting

Vice Chairperson Berg-Powers synthesized information from both campaigns, suggesting that every month; the commission reviews and considers really simple policy recommendations. Members of various city departments and local agencies can assist with providing information regarding current policies and initiatives to help support the Commission's charge to make policy recommendations.

• Transgender Day of Remembrance- November 20th

Unitarian Universalist church is hosting a candlelight vigil. Director Turchek will follow up about flag raising. Commissioner Robinson offered to raise the flag, but requested that the Commission first reach out to Officer McQueen to ask if she would like to participate

• International Human Rights Day – December 10th

Vice Chairperson Berg Powers requested permission from the Commission to organize small children's event at the library with the assistance of Katherine Esparza.

B. Outreach plan for city neighborhood watch meetings- Tabled

C. Review assignments for police community relations work plan

Chairperson Richman asked commissioners to think about some specifics around the chief agreeing to join the commission for the spring forum

Commissioners and members of the public were invited to attend American Slavery on Trial: A Metaphor for American Values held on Wednesday, November 8th in the Levi Lincoln Room.

5. Location of next meeting (December 4th, 2017): City Hall, Esther Howland Chamber

6. Adjournment at 8:05