

Chairperson
Aaron Richman

Vice-chairperson
Vacant

Clerk
Elizabeth O'Callahan



**City of Worcester
Human Rights Commission**

Members:
Lilian Chukwurah
Robyn Kennedy
Luis Portillo Reyes
Edward G. Robinson
Jacqueline Yang

**Monthly Meeting Summary – Monday, October 15th, 2018, 6pm
Worcester City Hall, Levi Lincoln Chamber, 4th Floor, 455 Main St., Worcester, MA**

Members present: Aaron Richman, Robyn Kennedy, Elizabeth O'Callahan, Edward Robinson, Jacqueline Yang

Members absent: Lilian Chukwurah and Luis Portillo Reyes

Staff: Jayna Turчек, Michelle Santana, Jamilex Rivas

1. Call to order and introductions

A quorum was established and Chairperson Richman officially called the meeting to order at 6:35pm. Commissioners introduced themselves. The Chairperson welcomed the Commissioners and those present.

2. Approval of August 6th, 2018 meeting minutes

Commissioner Kennedy motioned to approve as written. Commissioner Yang seconded. Motion passed with all in favor.

3. New Business:

A. Presentation from Freedom for All Massachusetts

Marco Bautista with Freedom for All Massachusetts gave a presentation on Question 3 on the Massachusetts November Ballot:

Precedent:

- First time transgender rights have ever been on a statewide ballot
- Similar vote on an equal protection ordinance in Houston in 2015
 - Initially 60% in favor in Houston Equal Rights Ordinance
 - Right before election, ads started to air about bathroom use
 - Following the ads, the results flipped. The ordinance ultimately failed to pass

Current polling:



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



- 74% of people in MA say they support trans rights
- However, only 56% support people using the bathroom that's comfortable for them
- \$250,000 in ads have been purchased by opponents of Question 3

Addressing Myths:

- Assault is already a crime
- There is no evidence that MA Law Protecting Trans People poses a safety risk
- There has been no increase in violence in public restrooms since it was enacted
- Myth: Business are being punished. There must be multiple infractions over a seven year period.

Yes on 3 Campaign

- Asking people how they feel about the scare-tactic ads, then talking through any concerns
- Has been very effective in creating dialogue and maintaining support

Current Support:

- Entire MA Chiefs of Police Association
- Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence & Women's Organizations
- Leaders in the business community: Google, BCBS, Harvard Pilgrim
- Additional Organizations in Support of Question 3:

<https://www.freedommassachusetts.org/join-the-coalition/>

Mr. Bautista said: "If we can't win here, then we can't win anywhere else"

For more information: <https://www.freedommassachusetts.org/>

Motion: Commissioner Robinson motioned to request that the City of Worcester Human Rights Commission sign on to the bottom of the Yes on 3, along with 50 other organizations, previously cleared through the law department so that it reads "the Worcester Human Rights Commission supports a 'Yes' vote on Question 3." Director Turchek read out a roll call vote. Motion passed with all in favor

B. Review WPD-LGBTQIA+ annual Activities Update

WPD LGBTQIA+ Liaison Officer Sharon McQueen provided an update on annual activities

- Has been volunteering at the hospital to help increase understanding among medical professionals and to support patients who are members of the LGBTQIA+ community
- Plans to create presentation for Law Enforcement about people who identify as non-binary
- Highlight of past year: Meeting a young person who'd been positively impacted by meeting her
- LGBTQIA+ stands for: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual,. The "+" increases inclusivity by incorporating transexual, pansexual, and all other orientations

Transgender Day of Remembrance: November 20th, 2018. Unknown whether a local observance is planned this year.

C. Presentation from Worcester Tree Initiative

Ruth Stewart, Director, and Derek Larange, community forester, of the Worcester Tree Initiative (now part of Tower Hill Botanical Garden), gave a presentation on "The Greening of Worcester."

- The Worcester Tree Initiative is a non-profit committed to growing and caring for urban forest:
 - Planting trees
 - Caring for trees (pruning etc.)
 - Educating the community
- Started 9 years ago after Asian Longhorn Beetle infestation- 6000+ street trees planted since 2009
- Prune trees, water newly-planted city trees and train community members in tree stewardship

3 Takeaways:

- Trees are essential for cities
- Trees out to be equitably distributed throughout our city
- We have a stake in making it happen

Environmental Justice

- Based on the principle that all people have a right to be protected from environmental pollution and enjoy the benefits of a clean and health-giving environment

Problems

- Increased exposure to pollution
- Brownfields
- Contaminated homes and properties
- Reduced access to green space
- More heavily burdened by urban heat island effect
- People most affected less able to make themselves heard
- Additional problems that can be addressed by planting trees

Benefits of trees

- Stormwater sequestration
- Provide cooling
- Absorb heat from the air
- Reduce air pollution - reduces respiratory-related diseases and hospitalizations
- Sulfur dioxide, carbon monoxide

Trees and Public Health

Tree Filled landscapes are correlated with:

- Stress reduction
- Improved concentration
- Higher test scores
- Increased physical activity
- Better air quality
- Fewer heat related illness
- Higher birth weights
- Shorter recovery times
- Increased social interaction
- Reduced crime rates

A Study of Trees

“If a park is not within a quarter mile, you’re probably not going to walk to it”

Map looked at whether 25% are minority, 25% live beneath average annual income or whether there is English isolation in a household, compared to the density of trees

- (1) University Park- Decrease in DBH (Diameter Breast Height) 13.2 avg vs 9.7; increased diversity
- (2) Elm Park
 - Net Loss; diversity same; DBH went down significantly 19.5 to 13.6 (lots of new trees)
- (3) Salisbury/WPI -Net loss; Significant increase in diversity; DBH went down 21.7 vs 14.2

Tree Canopy by Area:

- University Park: 11.85%
- Elm Park: 10.08%
- Salisbury Area: 46.05%
- Average for Worcester: 33.75%; Average for Urban Core: 10.73%

Diversity: Don't want more than 10% of any given species

Challenges to Planting

- Insufficient Space: Widening Roads, less soil
- Obstacles: Utilities above and below ground
- Stigma: People don't want to rake, see trees as future risk, don't like the way they look

Overcoming Challenges

- Insufficient space:
 - Plant street side in yards
 - Cut new pits where possible
 - Use zoning to require space
 - Build a solution where appropriate (Silva cells, structural soil, narrower roads)
- Obstacles:
 - Plant smaller trees under wires
 - Don't run utilities under sidewalk or planting strip
- Stigma:
 - Not easy to overcome
 - Rake less; Compost leaves with lawnmower
 - More proactive maintenance program - tree stewards
 - Changing mentality through education and conversation

Key to robust urban forest

- Building in adequate space for trees
- Protecting natural spaces in every neighborhood
- Diversifying tree species to mitigate pest problems and changing climate

Educating community- Upcoming Events:

- Tree Stewards at Tower Hill Botanic Garden; Check calendar for classes
- Tree planting events around the city

Recommendations:

- Complete streets policy - Trees not part of equation in complete streets platform
- No opportunity for public discourse - no reports, no status of trees
- Movement in MA called keep green belts green

More Information available at www.TreeWorcester.org

Clerk O'Callahan asked if Arbor Day and Tree Steward Events can be added to Human Rights Observances Calendar

D. Planning for Eleanor Hawley Human Rights Day Award

- Director Turchek suggested holding event on World Day of Social Justice February 20th. Commission agreed.
- Commissioner Kennedy proposed postponing December meeting from December 3rd to December 10th (Human Rights Day) and plan for the meeting to be part business meeting and part recognition of the significance of the day with the public. Commission agreed.
- Nomination process opens 12/10, closes Martin Luther King Day
- Clerk O'Callahan asked to establish subcommittee to plan the event. Commission members agreed more planning will take place in November meeting.

E. Election of Officers

- Tabled for later meeting

4. Old Business:

A. Follow up discussion on model ordinance covering community control over police surveillance (CCOPS) – TABLED FOR NOVEMBER

Commissioner Kennedy requested follow up to the previous series of questions/recommendations made to the Worcester Police Department

Clerk O'Callahan asked Commissioners to consider attending one or more of the remaining Neighborhood Watch Meetings by the December Human Rights Commission Meeting

Commissioner Kennedy asked Chairperson Richman to send follow up letter in order to provide responses ahead of City Council discussion if possible. Also wish to lend our support in any way we can.

5. Location of next meeting (November 19th, 2018): City Hall, Esther Howland Chamber

6. Adjournment at 8:12pm