

**City of Worcester Human Rights Commission Minutes**  
**VIRTUAL MEETING – Monday, June 7, 2021, 6:00pm**

**Members Present:** Jacqueline Yang, Elizabeth O’Callahan, Gullermo Creamer Jr., Lilian Chukwurah, LaToya Lewis, Edward G. Robinson, Deidre Padgett

**Members Absent:** Lauren De Oliveira

**Staff:** Jayna Turchek, Miriam Nyante,

**Guests:**

Stephanie Williams, City of Worcester Chief Diversity Officer  
Captain William Mosley, Worcester Fire Department Diversity Officer  
Rohan Brewster, Worcester Fire Department Assistant Diversity Officer  
Sgt. Derrick Leto, Worcester Police Department Diversity Officer

**1. Call to order and introductions**

A quorum was established, and Chairperson Yang called to order at 6:05pm. The Chairperson welcomes members of the commission and those present and introductions of those in attendance as well as roll call were taken.

Chairperson Yang began with an acknowledgement of the traditional, ancestral, territory of the Nipmuc Nation, the first people of Massachusetts and those whose land we are convening on tonight. While the Nipmuc history predates written history, records from the 1600s inform us that the original inhabitants of Worcester dwelled principally in three locations: Pakachoag, Tatesset (Tatnuck), and Wigwam Hill (N. Lake Ave). It is important to make this acknowledgment and to honor the ancestors that have come before us. It is all too easy to live in a land without ever hearing the traditional names and the history of the people who first resided and prospered in these lands and continue to reside and prosper.

The Human Rights Commission was established to promote the city’s human rights policies. It is the policy of the City to assure equal access, for every individual, to and benefit from all public services, to protect every individual in the enjoyment and exercise of civil rights and to encourage and bring about mutual understanding and respect among all individuals in the city. Our work requires us to address institutional racism so that as a community we can achieve racial equity. Our work also requires us to make visible the unheard, unearned, and unquestioned privilege enjoyed by some members of our community to the detriment of others. We take time to make this acknowledgement, to educate, so a path can be cleared for healing.

The term “**institutional racism**” refers specifically to the ways in which institutional policies create difference outcomes for different racial groups. The institutional policies may never mention any racial group, but their effect is to create advantages for whites and the oppression and disadvantage for people from groups classified as people of color.

The term “**racial equity**” is the active state in which race does not determine one’s livelihood or success. It is achieved through proactive work to address root causes of inequalities to improve outcomes for all individuals. That is, through the elimination or shifting of policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or fail to eliminate them.

The term “**privilege**” describes the unearned social power and informal institutions of society to all members of a dominant group. For example: “white privilege” and “male privilege.” Privilege is usually invisible to those who have it because we are trained to not see it but nevertheless it puts them at an advantage against those who do not have it.

## **2. Approval of May 10, 2021, meeting minutes**

<http://www.worcesterma.gov/agendas-minutes/boards-commissions/human-rights-commission/2021/20210510.pdf>

Chairperson Yang requested a Motion to Approve and Commissioner Lewis Motioned with a Second from Commissioner Robinson. The minutes from the May 10, 2021, meeting were approved.

## **3. Conversations with the Worcester Diversity Officers**

*The follow are questions that have previously been sent to our guests:*

### *1. Introductions- Please tell us about your position and what the scope of your work entails.*

**Stephanie Williams**, Chief Diversity Officer (approximately 6 months) for the City of Worcester. Prior to coming on as the Chief Diversity Officer for the city, I was in higher education for about 15 years doing diversity, equality and inclusion work, specifically toward multi-cultural affairs and social justice, which is a little different. I do consider myself to be a cultural humility practitioner, although, there is no expert in this field that is my area of expertise. Coming on to this has been very interesting. Changing the role into municipality from higher ed, having also working in corporate and I also worked in state government for some time.

This role, as Chief Diversity Officer, does report directly to the City Manager. It is cabinet level. And a lot of this role is very different from the two previous Chief Diversity Officers, again by reporting to the City Manager, which shows the commitment and gives a bit more leverage in terms of making institutional change or change management in general.

A lot of my work is internal, specifically around the workforce within the municipality. We have a little less than 18,000 employees. My tasks are really to look at the affirmative action plan, make sure our plan is equal opportunity employment, and make sure our policies, practices and procedures are inclusive and up to date (in terms of our workforce). Recruitment, retention, sourcing, training, and professional development are all a part of what I work with.

My role, specifically, is very inter-dependent and so as management changes, I work a lot with other departments. I don't necessarily work independently, as a standalone office, I make sure that DEI efforts, within different divisions and different departments, are maintaining the integrity of the work we are trying to do, specifically, around the city manager's executive board, to address and access institutional and instructional racism. A lot of this job is internal practice, policy procedure and organizational culture and change.

**Captain William Mosley**, Worcester Fire Department Diversity Officer. Rohan and I have been in this position for about 3.5 years. As Diversity Officers, there are three main areas of focus. The first being recruiting.

We have established practices and relationships within our community that allow us to create two-way access between us and the community. A big part of that is being a bigger presence in the Worcester High Schools, even the colleges, and engaging our young people and showing them a career option that they may want to consider. Last year, COVID threw a monkey wrench in everyone's plans, but we are hoping to pick right back up where we left off, as things become more normal.

The second area is retention and access to make sure all of our members have equal access to opportunities throughout the department.

Lastly, representation is the final main area of focus. Representation for members who bring forth complaints of harassment or discrimination. We provide a support/oversight function between the member of the unit and the administration. Other things we may take the lead on are the department trainings as well.

**Sgt. Derrick Leto**, Worcester Police Department Diversity Officer. I started my role October 1, 2020, during COVID. I am still new to my position, but my assignment and my responsibilities are recruitment, retention, equity and inclusion. This year, specifically, we have the Civil Service Police Entrance Exam coming up. I have a team of recruiters. Manny Familia was one of the officers who worked with me and was helping me throughout the process of engaging the community. We worked with the High Schools as much as possible through Google Classroom virtual meetings. I also did the same with the local colleges and got out in the community as best as we could to try to get as many interested, qualified candidates to sign up for the exam. We were able to increase minority recruitment by 4% from 2019.

I am also work with officers inside the department who are looking to advance and be promoted throughout the ranks, helping them study and giving them information about how to go about studying.

Also, retaining officers, that are seeking employment elsewhere, looking at the state or federal level, and trying to hold onto all of our officers and give them the best information that we have, saying that the Worcester Police Department is the best place to work.

2. *Share what you are working on relative to hiring, retention, and training of city employees?*

**Stephanie Williams:** I would say, not speaking for the other Diversity Officers, what we are doing is very similar around training and development. One of the things that I am doing, primarily, is looking at our Voluntary Identity Self-Disclosure (VISD) Form and working on that. There was some information on it that necessary or needed. Switching it up so that we can really capture who our workforce is and who our applicant pools are. We have not done the best job of tracking the system so that we know where we need to source, who are demographics are, and potentially gain some areas on where we should be marketing and where we should be recruiting.

Also, working on job postings. It is no surprise that some of our job postings, and the format in which we create those postings and descriptions are very antiquated. Most people are passive job seekers. We really need to get it up to date so that it can be looked at on an iPad or cell phone as you are scrolling through. And, again, the way we write it, the way we develop it, is really antiquated so we are really looking at our practices right now around recruitment as one of the biggest things. Looking at our applications. We had different applications and we really need to be consistent and have one application to avoid having one application ask a question that the other does not.

Also, looking at our hiring packet, so people do interviews within their own respective departments. It eventually all goes to human resources but the whole process is not just by human resources. So really getting an understanding of what the whole process is and what that looks like and making sure it flows and also ensuring that it works collaboratively and in tandem with our Community Action Plan. We do not just want to have pretty words on paper, we want to make sure it is aligned, is practical and makes sense for what we are really trying to do. Making updates and upgrades as needed, again, based on the executive order, today's current time to really stay abreast of everything that is going on. Really looking at our practices and policies, how we operate now around recruitment, where are we sourcing.

The biggest thing that I have heard is that there is not much diversity in our workforce. There is. I think people are talking about racial and ethnic diversity, but they are not really defining what they are looking at. So, really breaking down and doing a workforce profile is very important, for me, in understanding who the stakeholders are, working on getting an organizational chart for who reports the whom and how that dynamic works so we can understand which direction we need to go with that to make sense and be practical for us.

One of the great things that will be extremely helpful for us is our equity audit within human resources. It is really going to help us unpack some of the systems that are in place that may impede our mobility in terms of retention, even of our current staff and employees in terms of workplace development. That is where I am in terms of recruitment and retention.

One of the things we are looking at is, at one point we did have employee resource/ Infinity Groups, but I really think it is important to design them as employee resource groups because there needs to be some accountability for us as employers. When its an Infinity Group its just kind of an employee led group where there is a lot of conversation, but employee resource groups are normally within human resources, there is some kind of budget, there is some kind of leadership who advises this group and it is a little bit more in terms of health, wellness, and workforce development. I'm looking at really reestablishing those, changing the platform, reestablishing, not as an infinity group but employee resource groups.

Then looking at training, what do we offer? It is really exciting that the municipality just implemented an e-learning platform in which workforce can go on and take different trainings. We have not uploaded too much yet because it is very new. I think it was rolled out last week. But it really gives access to those who want to take trainings at different times of the day. You don't have to necessarily go to HR which is what we have done in the past. If you have a computer, you can access it, even if you are not in the office. So I think that is, again, a recognition of who we are and when we do that, it helps with retention.

It all starts with Human Resources, frankly, it all starts with doing a better job on-boarding, really learning what the on-boarding process is, looking back at the exit interviews to see why people are leaving. Really just trying to gather as much data as possible to do a workforce profile. I am actually working on a report which I am hoping will be able to be shared with the community, so you are all aware of what that looks like. We are also working with the National League of Cities to bring in the Race Equity and Leadership (REAL) training. I am actually finalizing the proposal right now so City Leadership will get that training.

I think we are kind of flipping the script, so to speak, on what we have done in the past which has usually been that front staff workers are getting this mandated training to check the box. We really want to work on cultural competence and intercultural understanding and dialog so that people can do their own internal work and realize how they should be and how they contribute or impact the work environment. Working with NLC we will have it for City Leaderships, so city council, they mayor, the city manager, the cabinet members. This is a significant investment, but well worth it. That leadership, those who are making decisions, will have an understanding of why we are doing the work and can then make sure it is installed into different departments within the workforce as a whole.

**Q:** (from Chairperson “Yang) *Is the equity audit happening now?*

**A:** No. By July. We want to do an equity audit with all departments. However, for financial reason, we want to be fiscally sound and mindful, so we are starting with 3 departments, Human Resources being one of them. So, by July we will have an RFP out to different agencies. We have to via bid. We cannot just select somebody. It is a hefty cost. Well worth it though, once we discover what it is we discovery and we really try to move it in a very different direction, navigating that. The process has not started yet. I am not sure what the bidding process is with the

municipality, being so new here, I am not sure how long that process will take but by July the RFPs will be complete and be able to be sourced out so that we can start bidding.

**Q:** (from Chairperson Yang) *Once that equity audit is done, will the public have access to the report?*

**A:** That's the plan.

**Rohan Brewster (WFD):** In regard to hiring we are currently getting ready for the next Civil Service Exam for Fire which is happening in Spring 2022. We are going to start in the fall with our recruiting campaign. We currently have a committee, and our team members are broken down into community organizations, schools and churches. In the fall we are going to get out there and all of our committee members will be points of contact. They are going to get out and start talking to all these different groups, getting names and information out to the people.

We are also working on recruitment videos to go to social media. They will be short, little clips which would be posted periodically, giving information about the fire department. We are also working on creating an exposure date where we will invite students to the Worcester Fire Department headquarters and we will show them, at the drill yard, exactly what we do. We will get them to put on gear, try different tools out, things of that nature. We would like to do the schools during the day and have another session in the afternoon for people off the streets, adults, people from community organizations and such.

For training, right now we are in the middle of putting out RITE training which is our racial equity training. Right now, we are focusing on emotional intelligence which is having self-awareness of your emotions and being able to control your emotions. The second aspect of that will be social intelligence. That is learning how to navigate and negotiate through all sorts of social environments. That will be out in the fall. We have no issues with retention right now.

**Sgt. Derrick Leto:** In regard to hiring, I have a recruitment team, as I said before, that has been helping me in the schools and colleges and out in the public. I have also been working very closely with our media relations lieutenant. We put a lot of information on social media, on the Worcester PD Facebook, twitter page. We also have recruitment videos that are on YouTube. Most recently, on March 18<sup>th</sup> of this year, we did a virtual information seminar for those interested in signing up for the Civil Service Exam. We have been very successful.

We have been able to increase the number of applicants for the upcoming Civil Service Exam. Numbers were very low in the beginning of the year, but with everything going on, my team and I were able to get the information out as best as possible. When it comes to retention, currently there has only been one officer that I spoke to, that came to me and asked me what my thoughts were and his future career as to WPD because he was thinking about going state or federal. I do my best to try to reach out and find those officers that are thinking about possibly advancing in their career in other agencies. I like to have a one-on-one with them before they make their final decision.

In regard to hiring, when it comes to recruitment, as of July 1<sup>st</sup> of this year, at the city manager's order, the city of Worcester is going to be starting their first ever WPD Cadet Program which will be 5 cadets on the WPD to go through the pipeline of becoming Worcester Police Officers. It will be a paid 2-year position. They will receive preference on the Civil Service Examination once they successfully complete the program.

Also, my team and I are also looking to get into schools, during the school year, after the school day and working with them in the summer from middle school to high school, starting a WPD Explore Program showing students exactly what the WPD does. Hopefully, this will help them in making a career decision, if they want to become a police officer in the future. Most young boys and girls, in the elementary school, approximately 20% want to be either police officers or firefighters and those numbers increased to about 50% in High School. Although, as they enter high school, they don't have the information on how to actually become a police officer. That's what my team and I are doing our best to do, get that information out there.

When it comes to training of police officers, internally, we work with the background investigation unit and the training division. I have attended the Racial Intelligence Training Engagement course, that Firefighter Brewster just mentioned, that too will hopefully be coming to the WPD in the near future. We have been doing Implicit Bias training in the recruit classes and at in-service training annually. That has been going on now for some time and will continue.

3. *What is your biggest roadblock to diversity the city workforce?*

**Stephanie Williams:** I think with this work, no matter whether you are within the municipality or not, there will always be roadblocks and challenges. I think my biggest roadblock is the reality that joining the city's municipality in the midst of global pandemics around health, economics and racial injustice. It is a critical time to really use my voice and really leverage my skillset and my knowledge to really make sure we can make a transformative change instead of performative change.

My challenges are around getting people to really understand the role of a Chief Diversity Officer. I think there is misunderstanding and it is important to meet people where they are. Really educating the entire workforce on what it is that I am doing. A lot of people think it is just the Chief Diversity Officer's job when you are talking diversity, equity and inclusion, encompassing so much more than race, it is everyone's responsibility.

Until we get everybody to understand that they play a role in it and identifying that it is their responsibility, we are not going to go far. It is not reasonable to put that burden/load on one person. It will never work. My biggest roadblock is educating the workforce on what it is I do and that they are responsible, they cannot come and just drop stuff on the CDO's table. We really need to work collaboratively in terms of getting the job done.

**Captain William Mosley:** I definitely echo the sentiment that it is everyone's responsibility especially in the macro-sense. Two of the biggest roadblocks we face in diversifying the fire department are, first, the cost of the exams. Currently it is \$250 to sit down and take a written exam and an additional \$150 to take the physical abilities test. Eleven years ago, when I took it, it was \$75. Right now, we are asking a lot of people to choose between paying a bill and taking a chance that they might be hired sometime down the line. That is a tough sell. Even looking at the numbers as they show up on the Civil Service list now, ten years ago there were 5000 people but currently there are about 500 who were willing to spend \$400 to figure out if this was a career for them. That is our main obstacle.

Another, indirect, roadblock is lack of diversity in the department itself and in the leadership structure. I think it minimizes the ability for members of our diverse populations to see themselves in that type of position. I do believe that if there is more diversity in the higher ranks of the department then some of these concerns will have more priority and widespread support. Our current administration, under the leadership of Chief Lavoie have done an amazing job supporting and actively participating and our initiatives to get our department more accessible and welcoming for all members of our community and department. But a more diverse leadership would have a significant impact.

**Sgt. Derrick Leto:** For the WPD, and myself, I will say that the biggest roadblock I am facing is the Civil Service Process. The WPD is a civil service department. The test is given every two years and, just like the fire department, there is an expense for the test. Our current test is \$100 followed by \$50 for the physical abilities test. Also, the history of policing. In trying to diversify the PD I have spoken to several people and it is not every day that my phone is ringing off the hook or I am getting emails from those who want to take the exam and have a long career as a police officer, especially with everything that has been going on the past few years in the country. That is a challenge.

We do have numbers in the police department. As you know, we just lost Manny Familia on Friday and last year we lost 6 minority officers, one of which was an official. This year there is a possibility that we will lose more, another black official and another 32-year black veteran. When we lose an officer, at anytime during their career, we don't just immediately replace them. It takes time and like I said there are a lot of people who don't know the civil service process. You have to take a physical abilities test, a psychological test, a drug test and there is a lot of things we need to let these candidates know on what they need to work on before they even take the tests.

In 2019, the percentage of minorities who signed up to take the test was 51% and through COVID and the civil unrest, my team and I were able to increase that percentage to 55%. We worked as hard as we could. It was very challenging. We did as many safe meet and greets as we could at gyms when they were open, a lot of WebEx and zoom meetings, and coffee shop meets but it was a struggle. My team and I want to get in the schools and try to talk to these young students as quickly as possible and try to grow our own homegrown police



officers. This way, by the time they graduate high school they are looking to go to college or the military and get a degree in criminal justice and then take the test.

There is a window of opportunity for the civil service exam. You can sign up to take it at 19 but you have to be in the academy and accepted by the age of 32 meaning there is about 5 or 6 tests between that time to become a police officer and a lot of people don't know that.

**Q:** (from Chairperson Yang): does the fire department have an age cutoff?

**A:** 19-32 years.

4. *What has been your greatest accomplishment to date?*

**Stephanie Williams:** I want to start with this as a caveat. With this work, any movement forward is success to me. A lot of people want low hanging fruit, they want something quick and dirty but that is performative, that is window dressing. What you don't measure and examine, you will not be able to transform. I would say, for me, the biggest accomplishment has been working with the City Manager and the team on the executive order because now it is in writing. Now it is out to the community. Now we can start doing this work. For me that is the biggest. This will help guide us to where we need to go and really help with change. It will take time. It will take individual's efforts, financial commitment and leadership commitment. But for me, that is a huge start.

**Captain William Mosley:** I cannot point to any one thing, but we are pleased with some things we have been able to accomplish. Our current civil service list is the most diverse that I have seen. While civil service does not give us specific demographic information we are able to draw some reasonable conclusions. Of the 130 city residents on the list, 31 have a language fluency other than English, 21 of those are Spanish speaking, 5 are Vietnamese speaking and 5 speak other languages. From best I can tell, based on name recognition, 6 are female. This does not take into account any other people of color who do not claim a language fluency other than English. I can conservatively guess we are sitting on about 38-40% diversity on that list of candidates. I think that is a huge win considering our department right now is about 90% white male. We have seen small increases over the last few classes but we are starting to really see the years of work we have put in starting to pay off now and this is one of those manifestations.

Also, we have added an Assistant Diversity Officer and a diversity committee totaling 6 members. We are able to share the work and have a more efficient division of labor, allowing us to sector off various parts of the community and the department. With the help of Chief Lavoie we have made diverse representation in the fire department staff a priority in the hiring process. Before we convene a candidate investigation unit, we make sure that there is diverse representation as we field all our candidates. We were the first to employ open houses for recruitment in conjunction with the human resources department in Boston and since then HRD has adopted it as a recruitment practice across the state. We were able to bring RITE training to the WFD and we have established a

library of study resources for first level promotional exams in an effort to create better access and offset some of the costs that come with securing that material.

We have been able to be in Worcester schools the last few years for career days, all throughout the year. Approximately 12-15 per year are in our schools, on their career day platforms. We were able to host an open forum for all department members wishing to attend after the death of George Floyd. Members of various backgrounds came together in a respectful and thoughtful space to share their thoughts and feelings on that incident and the general climate, while also having the opportunity to hear other people's point of view. I would put that up there as one of our biggest accomplishments. Finally, we were able to conduct a department survey, shortly after this gathering, on issues such as race, harassment and general workplace culture. We were able to share this data with the administration and the union to identify areas of success and concern.

**Q:** (From Commissioner Creamer) For all three, you have listed your accomplishments, which are incredible, but do you all, in your capacity, feel that your department and offices are not only giving you the respect that you deserve but the overall elevation to accomplish the important work that you are doing? Do you feel like you have got the support of leadership?

**A: (Stephanie Williams)** Speaking only for myself, the reality is that in this work it is very interdependent. I do feel, acknowledging that the City Manager put this in writing, our credibility will come from what we produce. I am so new to this that I cannot say No. I could maybe say that there are some departments that have a little push back.

As a CDO my job is to disrupt the status quo. We talk about inclusion but that is just a pretty word. The fact is if we are being inclusive, we are shifting how we currently operate. We are getting comfortable with the uncomfortable. So, there may be individuals, within departments, that put their guard up when I am asking for data or to be provided with information. I think some individuals are hesitant, some don't feel like the position is needed, some are just scared or uncomfortable.

But in terms of leadership, I would have to acknowledge the fact that the City Manager put this in writing, went out to the community and said: "this is what we are going to do." They hired a Chief Diversity Officer, not just to check the box. I have heard him say several times that we all have to commit. To answer your question, yes there is pushback and obstacles from individuals, absolutely, its expected, but so far, so good.

**A: (Captain Mosley)** For me and my experience, all it really took was open communication between us and Chief Lavoie and the administration. We would come across things that if we did talk about them, maybe everyone would know how to fix it. The Chief and his administration have been very open and supportive. If there are things we see that they don't, we can talk about it and achieve some understanding. He has always been very helpful and supportive and just open to the idea of learning

something that he did not know the day before and then taking the knowledge and turning it into something that is helpful for us to achieve our goals. I have no complaints from our leadership in supporting us to do our job.

**A: (Sgt. Leto)** I work directly for the Chief Sargent. I work in his office, and we have had several difficulty dialoging lessons and we talked about issues that he may have not known about or seen. Like Stephanie said, disrupting the status quo and showing them things that they are not used to, I have the support of my Chief. He put me in this position before the City Manager came out with the executive order. Prior to getting in this role, I was the Assistant Diversity Officer for my predecessor, Sgt. Lee Boykin, who is now the head of security for the Woo Sox. I was working with him pre-COVID and we were working with the last Chief Diversity Officer who was at City Hall, and I have been working alongside Captain Mosley and Firefighter Brewster addressing issues and putting our heads together to see how we can make changes, internally and externally out in the community. I would say it is going to take some time, but the Chief and I are on the same page. The Chief is from the city, he is from the street, he understands the street and he is all about community policing. It will take some time to make changings and when I say time, not only for me to be in my position but it will take several academy classes and like I said before, the test is only given every two years. To increase diversity in the police department it will take some time to get those numbers where we would like them to be. Also, when it comes to career advancement and promotions, the jobs have to be there and there have to be vacancies. I am staying positive and I hope I am successful in my position.

5. *What is the highest rank currently held by 1. person of color and 2. Woman?*

**Stephanie Williams:** I am assuming that when you say “rank” it is fire and police. We do not really have ranks.

**Captain William Mosley:** Right now, the highest-ranking person of color is District Chief Jason Erics and as of right now, we have no women about the rank of firefighter, but we did have a lieutenant that recently retired. Currently the Worcester Fire Department has four officers of rank who are of color in the department (District Chief Erics, Captain Jones, Lieutenant Rodriguez and myself).

**Q:** (Chairperson Yang) How many fire fighters are there?

**A:** 380-390.

**Sgt. Derrick Leto:** For the Worcester Police Department, currently we have Captain Kenneth Davenport, who is a black male. He is currently the highest-ranking officer of color. He oversees the Bureau of Professional Standards (aka Internal Affairs). The highest-ranking female is Lieutenant Donna Brissette, a white female, currently working in the operation division. Prior to that,

throughout the years at the Worcester Police Department, the first Hispanic official was Lieutenant Miguel Lopez. He was also the first Hispanic Sargent.

6. *Is there a list of who were first to break barriers to leadership positions? Could this be posted on city website?*

**Stephanie Williams:** I did inquire about that and there is not a list of firsts in terms of getting into the leadership positions. I believe that may be because that is so subjective. There is no foundation in terms of what we are tracking, we have not tracked the first in terms of leadership roles as far as I have been informed.

**Captain William Mosley:** That is true. It is not something that is tracked. We have just been able to develop a list based off general knowledge and a little bit of research, but it is not anything that is open for everyone to see. The first person of color to reach the rank of District Chief is Chief Jason Erics. The first person of color to achieve the rank of Captain was Captain Evan Jones. The first person of color to reach the rank of Lieutenant was Lt. Herby Wilson. The first, and highest-ranking Hispanic member is Captain Hernandez. And the first and highest-ranking female was Lt. Annie Pickett. Recently we have had our first all-woman crew, which happened on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May including Firefighter Robin Melvin, Firefighter Gina Genatossio-Lauder and Firefighter Melissa Mercadante. We also have the first women ever hired, at the same time, were firefighter Robin Melvin, Firefighter Angela Roy and retired Lt. Annie Pickett. We have no record of the first black firefighter in WFD history and we do not have anything definitive, it has been difficult.

**Sgt. Derrick Leto:** I merged who is highest on the ranks and who was first to make rank in the last question.

7. *Do you have a plan for leadership development as well as succession plans?*

**Stephanie Williams:** That is one of the things I am working on with Human Resources. It is important that is housed and comes from Human Resources because it needs to be ingrained in the fabric of who we are as a municipality. When we are talking about change management, strategic planning, and strategy development, I really need to assess what it is that we offer now, consistently. There are some blind-spots and some areas that we do really well. But we haven't really done a great job in having a leadership succession plan. We also need to track our trainings, we have some great trainings, but that is something being looked at by HR in terms of this new E-learning platform so we need to identify skills and gaps and train in these first. I think the audit is going to be very helpful with doing that. Then, when we are talking about change management and shifting the culture of who we are, that is where we will be able to work in more opportunities, be it promoting or working on developing the skill sets of our current workforce. Promoting employee engagement and retention I think is what we need to think about. Engaging our employees as part of shifting the culture so

that we can get them to want to grow and develop in their roles. There is no plan as of right now, but this is on the radar and being worked on.

**Captain William Mosley:** To answer that question, we have “informal mentoring”, on a small scale. I would like to see that become a formal process and be more widespread, where we can reach down and develop up and coming members of the fire department. Beyond that, the only other thing we have as far as development is access for members to professional development and advancement materials. No succession plan is in place at this time.

**Sgt. Derrick Leto:** For the Worcester Police Department, I am encouraging every officer who is seeking to get promoted on how to do that. What I have noticed throughout my career is that younger officers are looking to advance in their career throughout our special units and other divisions. I also try to encourage, as best I can, to keep an open mind on what their future holds. I try to have every officer think about their future. A lot of officers are not willing to change their shifts due to family reasons. Some are not ready to take a promotional exam because of their family situation. I do my best to try to encourage them on why they should take the test and what the possibilities their future holds within the police department. I am currently working on a marketing and recruitment plan to help with diversity in the Worcester Police Department, to look at our data and try to see what is working best on recruitment and how to interest candidates, not only to sign up to take the test but to go through the process and to be successful and retain them for a full 32-year career.

8. *What is your approach to address unconscious biases in the workplace?*

**Stephanie Williams:** So, for me, the reality is that you cannot do a training and take away unconscious biases. We really have to bring in the cultural competence component and the multi-cultural affairs so they can understand how their biases show up and come into play. There is no training because there is no fix. We all have biases. Once we recognize what those biases are and how to navigate through them and then having enough emotional and social intelligence to recognize what triggers us, and to question ourselves on our thinking. We have to be able to recognize it, so we should have learning opportunities and development opportunities where people can develop that skill set. My goal is to teach employees to have a pause between thought and action and have some accountability in learning social and emotional intelligence and cultural competence.

**Captain William Mosley:** I agree with a lot of that. Our approach to implicit bias is to remove the demonizing stigma that puts people on the defensive making them less open to understanding it. We all have it. Implicit biases are formed by our education and experience, some good, some bad, some subtle, some not so subtle. For example, if I grew up in a home where there was alcohol abuse, I could possibly have an aversion to dealing with drunk people at work and may

never realize it. Our approach is to let members know that it is not uncommon and doesn't necessarily make them a bad person. Also, to teach them to be aware of their own implicit biases, especially if it will interfere with the professional workplace we want to maintain and how to manage them, so they do not affect the level of service we provide.

**Sgt. Derrick Leto:** In addressing unconscious biases, we need not to be complicit. If something is said, or someone is uncomfortable, in a certain situation, we need to put a finger on it and talk about it. Like Captain Mosley said, everybody has implicit biases, we all grew up differently and we all come from different walks of life. We need to sit down and talk about these issues and have this difficult dialogues and uncomfortable conversations. We do implicit bias training in the academy, at in annual in-service trainings. It is great to have the training, but if issues still come up, internally or externally, we need to talk about it and discuss it. The Chief and I are looking forward to the RITE training and hopefully it does come to the Worcester Police Department. It focuses on the individual officer. This training is emotional intelligence plus social intelligence equals racial intelligence. So hopefully this training, along with the Implicit Bias training will make the workplace better and more professional.

9. *Money was allocated in the FY22 City of Worcester Draft Budget in the Equity category for the creation of a “new investigations unit within the Department of Human Resources to review and address complaints against employees—whether in City Hall, Police, Fire, or beyond.” What types of complaints will this unit be able to address? Will they investigate complaints of protected class harassment? Will the public be able to make complaints about city employees directly to this unit?*

**Stephanie Williams:** I would be lying if I said I know the answer. The reality, based on what I know, is that because it has not been created yet, it is in the process and it is moving forward as part of the Executive Order, but what does it look like once it is formed? I don't think any of us know the answer to that. It will be so new. I know why it was implemented based on some of the requests and things that happened and the historical component behind it, but I don't know what the daily operations will look like. I wouldn't even feel comfortable speaking on that. I don't know, maybe Human Resources has a stronger grasp since it would be through their department. I just know that it is in the works and it was implemented as part of the Executive Order.

10. *WPD: Could you provide an update on your progress on the department survey? (The HRC asked in October if the Worcester Police Department could conduct an anonymous survey among its officers who are people of color. Sgt Leto reported that he was moving this forward. Is there an update?).*

**Sgt. Derrick Leto:** Yes. I am working with Captain Mosley, who gave me some great advice on how to go about doing the survey he conducted for the Worcester Fire Department. I've spoken to my Chief about it. But, like Stephanie had said earlier, Human Resources are going to be audited and the Worcester Police

Department is also going to be audited. We do not want the officers to go through survey fatigue. There will be internal and external surveys done on the WPD so we are going to wait for that to happen first. Hopefully that will get us the answers and the data that we are looking for just like the Fire Department was successful in it. We will evaluate after the audit is done whether we need to do a survey like the fire department did, that was very successful.

**Q:** (Chairperson Yang) Are you referring to the equity audit?

**A:** (Sgt. Leto) Yes. I believe Stephanie Williams talked about it earlier. I believe there are three departments that will be audited, human resources are one of them and the Worcester Police Department is another.

**A:** (Stephanie Williams) I was just going to add, what Sgt. Leto said is correct, we really don't want staff getting survey fatigued. Part of the Equity audit is really unpacking in order to get a roadmap, or blueprint, so to speak, in terms of what our needs are and where we need to go within the departments that are being audited. They are going to survey the workforce in those departments and get that feedback. I am not sure what the survey consisted of, and what specific questions there was, but what would happen is, if there were specific questions, Sgt. Leto would have to work with leadership working on the audit and with the third party that is going to come in to ensure that these questions are framed within the surveys that are going to the workforce.

*Additional Questions/Comments from Commission Members:*

Commissioner Creamer: We are all super grateful for the work that you are doing. It is under-appreciated. I think that we often don't have the opportunity to say thanks and just know that those of us on the Commission are paying attention and there are residents in Worcester that are paying attention. There are residents that really care about this. I think the goal is to create a city that reflects its residents and I think we have a little bit of work to do. Thank you.

Commissioner Robinson: *Does the Civil Service Exam help to diversity the work force or is it a hinderance? That would be for the WPD and WFD.*

**A:** (Captain Mosley) I don't feel that is necessarily a priority. I am not saying that in a bad way. They establish preferences on the list. There is an absolute preference for any applicant who had a family member die in the line of duty. Then there is Veteran's preference followed by residential preference. We work within those constructs. The best way we can affect that is to get enough people to the exam. A diverse pool of people to take the exam. How it falls from there is sorted out by civil service. I don't know how much of a hinderance it is, but its not necessarily a help either.

**A:** (Rohan Brewster) I would like to add something really quick. Other states give points for veterans and in Massachusetts it does not matter what your score is as long as it is passing, if you are a veteran you go to the top of the list. So that may be becoming an issue to. If I get a 70 and I am a veteran, and someone else gets a 99, just because I am a veteran I will higher on the list.

**A: (Lt. Leto)** The Civil Service Exam is very similar when it comes to police and fire. The difference on the police side, is that we have a consent decree. When it comes to preference, a child of an officer that have been killed in the line of duty are at the top. A child of an officer who was disabled is second to that. Then disabled veterans and then veterans. Then we have a consent decree for the police department which is that every 4<sup>th</sup> spot, the applicant is plugged in if they are either black or Hispanic. I don't believe the fire department has that. It is something that can help us or hurt us depending on who a veteran is. To give an example, I am a veteran and I am also black so when I took the test, many years ago, I was at the top of the list. That's how it goes.

Commissioner O'Callahan: I have a philosophical question. We talked a lot about very concrete and specific things which is fantastic. I was just wondering how you conceptualize diversity when you are going through this work? What is the ideal you are striving for?

**A: (Rohan Brewster)** I would just like my department to look like the city. That's it.

**A: (Captain Mosley)** Just to piggyback on that, I feel like there is a level of comfort from our citizens when people like them show up and we need to do a better job at providing that level of comfort through our hiring process and in recruiting people that can fill out that goal.

**A: (Lt. Leto)** For me, I would like the police department to also mirror the city. To also have all the languages that are in the city. There are several languages that are spoken in the Worcester public schools and throughout the city of Worcester. In order to build partnerships we need more officers and officials of color on the job that speak several languages in order to bridge the gaps that we are challenged with every day.

**A: (Stephanie Williams)** For me, diversity is all encompassing. It is not just racial and ethnic diversity. Representation is extremely important, but that is not the end-all-be-all. If we are recruiting more people of color, or racial and ethnic diversity, and bringing them into an environment that is not conducive to them, or maybe more toxic to them, we are doing a disservice. So, what we have to do is really recognize and analyze who we are in terms of our culture and how we operate rather than just pulling people and putting them in an environment that could be harmful. We need to do our own work internally as well as look at racial and ethnic recruitment. I think we also need to reframe the conversation, not that I am disagreeing with my brothers on here either, asking ourselves, how can we better serve our community that is very diverse? Not just getting more people in here that look like our city, it is about how we are serving our city. We do want to look like our city, yes, I am not throwing that off the table, but we also want to make sure we are reframing the ideas of how we better meet the needs of the city in which we serve.

Commissioner Lewis: *For PD and FD, if we have anyone listening who wants to get involved, how would they contact you?*



**A: (Lt Leto)** email: [letod@worchester.ma.gov](mailto:letod@worchester.ma.gov) or contact the Chief's office: 508-799-8617 ext. 28313

**A: (Captain Mosley)** email: [wmosley@worchester.ma.gov](mailto:wmosley@worchester.ma.gov) or contact 508-735-4644

**A: (Rohan Brewster)** email [brewsterr@worchester.ma.gov](mailto:brewsterr@worchester.ma.gov)

#### **4. Public Comment**

Kevin Ksen: *I am confused by the Consent Decree. If our goal is to follow the Consent Decree, I would think that is holding us back, not moving us forward. We are filling more than 25% people of color. I keep hearing that and I thought we were well passed the Consent Decree. I haven't heard anyone talk about veterans, so I am wondering what percentage of our workforce is veterans, overall? In the fire department? In the police department?*

**A: (Lt. Leto)** For the WPD, currently we have 21% veterans.

**A: (Captain Mosley)** We do not have the exact number on the percentage of veterans, but it is similar to the police department and on the current civil service list, there are 21 veterans on it.

**A: (Stephanie Williams)** I do not have to overall number accessible right now. I was not prepared for that question.

#### **5. Adjournment at 8:15. Next Meeting: Monday July 12, 2021, 6:00pm**