

Human Rights Commission
Monthly Meeting – Monday, September 13, 2010
Esther Howland Chamber, Worcester City Hall

Present: Cheryl Pope, Chairperson; Maria Florez, Edward Kwiyp, Edward Robinson, Eduardo Rivera, Cara Berg Powers

Staff: Fran Manocchio

Unable to Attend: Kathy Gervais, Trinh Huynh, Mable Millner

Members of the Public: Herbert S. Cremer, Gordon Davis, Ronal Madnick, Himel Jayasekara (Clark Intern)

Meeting called to order at 6:00 pm by Cheryl Pope, Chairperson.

1. Cheryl Pope, Chairperson, welcomed new Commissioner, Cara Berg Powers, who shared some of her background and experience. She was raised in the Main South neighborhood of Worcester and graduated from Clark University. She is currently working in the field of youth and media and is pursuing her doctorate degree.
2. August 2010 meeting summary unanimously accepted, as submitted.
3. Status of Move to City Hall: No further updates at this time.
4. Ethics Training: Mable and Cara need to complete the training.
5. Old Business:
 - a. “Know Your Rights When Stopped by the Police”: Himel Jayasekara, Clark intern, and Eduardo Rivera provided an update. We received additional feedback from the Worcester Police Department and the city’s Law Department as to language in the document. They are recommending that we use:
Officers have the right to search you or your home without a warrant. Additionally, in some circumstances, officers may search you or your car without a warrant and/or without your consent. However, there are some circumstances where you within your rights not to consent to such a search.

The language the Commission proposed is:

You don’t have to consent to a search of yourself, your car or your home. However, in some situations officers may have legal authority to search you, your vehicle or your home without a warrant or your consent.

Following discussion and feedback from Ronal Madnick, Executive Director of the American Civil Liberties Union of MA, Worcester County

Chapter, the Commission voted unanimously to keep the original language. As Himel noted, one population the Know Your Rights campaign is targeting is newcomers/immigrants and needs to be kept simple. Cara stated that the same is true if we are outreaching to youth. Fran will review the ACLU's wallet card (English and Spanish). Fran will then report the Commission's decision to Worcester Police Department and the Law Department.

- b. Letter regarding ballot Question 2 Affordable Housing: Cheryl Pope signed letter to the Mayor and City Council expressing the HRC's strong opposition to Question 2.
 - c. Update on Liveries: Eduardo Rivera provided an update on the ongoing situation regarding liveries.
 - d. Social Justice Roundtable: Next meeting will be held on Thursday, September 16, 2010 at 5:30 pm at the YWCA.
 - e. 2010 Eleanor T. Hawley Award: Fran distributed folders with nominations and scoring criteria. Selection meeting will be held on Monday, September 20, 2010 at 6:00 pm.
 - f. December 10th Educational Event: In recognition of the United Nation's Declaration of Human Rights, we will hold a public forum on employment discrimination. We will invite new Chair of MCAD, employment attorney from Legal Assistance Corporation and employment attorney from the Office of the Attorney General. Brief discussion about the possibility of a client providing testimony, as long as it does not place that individual in harm's way.
6. New Business (out of order): Gordon Davis, representing We the People, requests the Human Rights Commission to oppose the Arizona state law S.B. 1070. The federal government is opposing the law based upon separation of powers (state law does not supersede federal law) and the ACLU is opposing the law based on civil rights violations. We the People, a grassroots community group, is requesting that the HRC take a stand and oppose the law based on civil and human rights violations. Mr. Davis suggested that the current Arizona law is being duplicated in 20 other states and will probably be tested in the Supreme Court. Mr. Davis also reported that cities designated as "Sanctuary Cities" were ruled illegal at the Appeals Court level. Mr. Madnick noted that the ACLU is hosting three upcoming meetings with immigration experts (attorneys) during the week of October 12th at Worcester Public Library. Commissioners requested additional information from Mr. Davis and Mr. Madnick in order to hold further discussion regarding this topic. Fran will forward additional information to Commissioners.

7. Director's Report: The College of the Holy Cross is hosting a group of university students from South Africa during the end of September to the beginning of October. We would like to invite them to our October Commission meeting as well as the Mayor. Fran will schedule the Levi Lincoln room. MCAD has a change in leadership; Malcolm Medley left the position of Chair and has been replaced by Julian Tynes. Commissioner Martin Ebel (who met with us last year) left and has been replaced by Jaime Williamson (who will be located in the Springfield office).
8. Public Comment: Mr. Cremer noted a recent article in the Telegram & Gazette which described a delegation of Jewish students from Clark University going to the mosque to offer their support to the Muslim community.

Meeting adjourned at 7:30 PM.

DRAFT