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City Manager



CITY OF WORCESTER

**Human Rights Commission
Meeting Summary
December 5th, 2011 6:00 PM
Worcester Youth Center, 326 Chandler Street, Worcester**

Members Present: Chairmen Eduardo Rivera, Vice Chair Cara Berg Powers, Edward Robinson, Harry Danso, Kathleen Gervais, Mable Millner, Jeffrey Miller, Udem Ukpog, Edward Kwiyup.

Members Absent: None.

Staff: Abby McCabe, City Manager's Office and Ines Beron, Housing Intake Coordinator

Others Present: Gordon Davis, Gwen Davis, Hilda Ramirez.

There being a quorum the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:01 PM.

Welcome and Introductions:

The new Commission members introduced themselves.

Minutes

On a motion made by Mr. Rivera, seconded by Ms. Gervais, the minutes from the November 7th 2011 meeting were approved as amended. Vote: all in favor.

Worcester Immigrant Coalition (WIC):

Ms. Beron explained that the WIC is a small grassroots group that does not have a lot of resources but they conduct investigations and are dedicated to protecting and advocating for the rights of immigrants in the Worcester.

Sanctuary City Follow-Up: Ms. McCabe reported that Sanctuary Cities were discussed in 2007 by the Commission and the City Council. A draft resolution was prepared by the former Human Rights Director with the Commission but the item was tabled and a vote was never taken. The consensus of the board was to again table this topic and to not move forward with a resolution.

Worcester Housing Authority (WHA):

Ms. Beron reported that she contacted the Executive Director of the WHA and he indicated that he would provide Ms. Beron and the Commission quarterly updates on the new program. The Commission reviewed the draft letter prepared by Ms Berg Powers to the WHA Executive Director asking for more information about the new program discussed at the October 3rd meeting.

On a motion made by Mr. Rivera, seconded by Mr. Robinson, the HRC approved the letter as written and to be signed by the Chair. Vote: all in favor.

Drop the I-Word Campaign Follow Up:

Ms. Powers summarized Tuesday's City Council meeting where the petition the Commission submitted was discussed. The item was referred to the law department for further review.



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The Commission discussed next steps for this item. The Commissioners believed it was important for the City to support this effort to remove the word “illegal” when referring to a person’s immigration status and replace it with the word “undocumented”. The Commission wants to make sure this comes back for City Council. Ms. McCabe will follow up on when this may be before City Council again.

The Commission also discussed inviting the new Mayor to the February meeting to discuss the work of the Commission and the Drop the I Word Request. The Commission voted to invite the Mayor to the February Commission meeting.

Ms. Berg Powers will provide the Commission through Ms. McCabe the Drop the I Word resolution that she prepared.

End Homelessness Plan Follow Up: At the November meeting the Commission voted to ask the City Manager to establish a task force that would create a new end homelessness plan that would look at the root causes of homelessness. The Commission’s second petition to City Council was referred back to the City Manager. Ms. McCabe summarized the recent efforts for the new and temporary Triage and Assessment Center. Although the three-year plan to end homelessness plan has been in place for over three year’s the City is still working on implementing many aspects of the plan.

Know Your Rights Trilingual Booklet: The Commission made edits to some of the addresses and organizations listed in the brochure. It was suggested to also include a Portuguese translation. Ms. Beron volunteered to translate into Portuguese. Staff will work with Mr. Rivera to finalize this booklet.

Commissioners District Report: Mr. Robinson and Ms. Gervais summarized recent neighborhood crime watch meetings that they attended since the last meeting.

Human Rights Commission Ordinance Review:

The Commission reviewed the Commissions ordinance outlining the mission, role and authority of the Commission. All correspondence should be through the Chair.

Ms. Berg Powers will provide Ms. McCabe with contact information for a possible location for the next meeting.

Staff Report: Ms. McCabe will distribute the updated Commission roster to the group. The Human Rights Day event is planned for Saturday December 10th and the Commission is a co-sponsor and staff is working on providing the organizer with the donation from the Commission. A complaint was not filed on the issue at 42 Vernon Street that occurred last spring with the air conditioning at the elderly housing. In the future, it is recommended that a complaint be filed so that the issue can be investigated and followed up on in a timely manner.

Other Business:

Ms. Berg-Powers has received information on youths and human rights. This will be added to the January meeting agenda to discuss in more detail.

The meeting adjourned at 7:51 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Abby McCabe

Next Meeting
Monday, January 9th, 2011
Location: TBD 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM