

Michael V. O'Brien
City Manager



CITY OF WORCESTER

**Human Rights Commission
Meeting Summary
Monday, March 5th, 6:00 PM
Pleasant Street Neighborhood Network Center, 301 Pleasant Street**

Members Present: Chairmen Eduardo Rivera, Edward Robinson, Kathleen Gervais, Mable Millner, Udemé Ukpong, Harry Danso, Cara Berg Powers and Edward Kwiyup.

Members Absent: Jeffrey Miller.

Staff: Abby McCabe, City Manager's Office.

Others Present: Mayor Joseph Petty, Councilor Sarai Rivera, Jaqueline Norton, Herb Cremer (Worcester's Commission on Disability), Vicki Fagan, Raquel Benitez, Karen Benitez, Mildred Collins (WAFT), Grace Ross (WAFT), Martha Assefa (WAFT).

WAFT = Worcester Anti-Foreclosure Team.

There being a quorum the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

The Commission and guests introduced themselves. The Mayor and District 4 Councilor were in attendance for the meeting and gave a brief introduction. The HRC asked the Mayor if he could look into the Worcester Public School's policies on bullying. The HRC also suggested that the WPS superintendant be invited to a HRC meeting so that they can further review the WPS policies on bullying. Councilor Rivera suggested that the HRC try to reach out to Worcester's immigrant population to help them learn about available resources and to work with faith based organization to assist in this effort.

Minutes:

On a motion that was duly made and seconded, the Commission voted to approve the meeting minutes from the February 6, 2012 meeting as written by a vote of 7-0-1 (Ms. Berg-Powers abstained).

New Business:

Worcester Anti-Foreclosure Team (WAFT):

Grace Ross from WAFT filed a formal complaint with the HRC and further explained the foreclosure situation in Worcester. A major concern from WAFT was what happens to the material possessions of those that are evicted and asked that the HRC investigate this and the eviction laws.

A member of the public asked if people who vandalize foreclosed properties if they are being prosecuted and charged. Ms. Ross explained that this is something that has been brought to the attention of and is under review by the Assistant District Attorney.

Discussion:

The Commission discussed what would be the purpose of the public hearings. Ms. Ross suggested that the public hearings could be an opportunity for the HRC to hear and take in complaints from the community. It was the consensus of the Commission to hold public hearings but to have a clear goal of the purpose of the hearings.



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On a motion by Ms. Berg-Powers and seconded by Ms. Millner, the Commission voted to hold public hearings in the City's five districts and create a subcommittee to work on this to compose a report with recommendations after the conclusion of the hearings by a vote of 8-0-0.

The subcommittee to work on the public hearings on the foreclosures will be composed of Cara Berg-Powers, Eduardo Rivera and Edward Kwiyp. The subcommittee will meet later this week to further discuss and plan.

Other Business:

The Commission asked for an update status on the Drop the I Word Campaign since it was last sent to the law department back in November or December. Ms. McCabe said she would look into this and report back to the Commission. The Commission also asked for an update on the Housing Authority's Better Life Program. Staff should check in with Ms. Beron to see if she has been receiving updates from the WHA.

The next meeting will be held on Monday April 2nd at City Hall. The exact room location will be based on availability and the HRC will be notified.

Ms. McCabe reported to the Commission that the new Human Rights & Disabilities Director has just started working for the City and there will be a meet and greet on March 20, 2012 at City Hall at 6:30 PM.

One of the Commission members asked if the City Clerk could provide to the HRC for the next meeting a copy of the city's census.

Commissioners District Reports

Mr. Robinson and Mr. Ukpong recently attending various neighborhood and community meetings and distributed brochures.

On a motion that was duly made and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 7:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Abby McCabe

Next Meeting
Monday, April 2nd, 2012
Location: City Hall (exact room TBD)
6:00 PM – 8:00 PM