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**City of Worcester  
Human Rights Commission**

**Members:**  
Shawna Curran  
Kathleen Gervais  
Izaida Gonzalez  
Robyn Kennedy  
Sean Lauziere  
Ike McBride

**Monthly Meeting – Monday January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016, 6pm**  
Southeast Asian Coalition, 484 Main Street, Suite 400

**Members Present:** Cara Berg Powers, Kathleen Gervais Robyn Kennedy, Sean Lauziere and Aaron Richman

**Members Absent:** Ike McBride, Shawna Curran, Izaida Gonzalez, and Lillie Williams

**Staff:** Jayna Turchek

1. **Call to Order:** A quorum was established and Human Rights Commission Chair, Aaron Richman, called the meeting to order at 6:37pm. The Chair welcomed the Commissioners. Everyone introduced himself or herself.
2. **Approval of December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2015 minutes:** Unanimously approved as written.

3. **Old Business**

**A. Subcommittee: Dialogues on Race recommendations**

Robyn provided the report back from the subcommittee. The Committee met once since the last general HRC meeting and discussed the work plan to address concerns raised during the dialogues around public safety. The subcommittee developed a series of questions for the Worcester Police Department's Bureau of Professional Standards and recommends inviting them to the February HRC meeting to discuss the BOPS reports submitted to HRC.

The following points were discussed and were agreed would be shared with BOPS in advance of the meeting in February:

- We need to understand the data collection and mining process, so we can know what are the reporting limitations.
- The current BOPS report does not provide racial information and there is no way to track to see when and if racial profiling occurs.
- One suggestion was for the Commission to review from time to time a sampling of the transcripts from the complaints to get a better sense of the nature and context of the complaint.
- One of the limitations of reviewing quarterly reports is that it is hard to know when complaints were initiated and closed. There was a suggestion that the Commission review the report year to year to see resolutions and patterns, if any, that could be linked to a period of time.



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- Knowing the location of where the incident occurred would also be helpful to know, perhaps it could be sorted by patrol routes.

It was also suggested that Lt. Bates report on his LGBTQ liaison duties as well during the February meeting.

#### **B. Review of shelter survey—Tabled until March**

Cara offered to help to get the remaining three surveys completed and will prepare a summary for the March meeting.

#### **4. New Business**

##### **A. Review response regarding City social media policy**

Jayna shared the responses she received regarding the Commission's questions:

**Q1: Purpose.** As stated in the policy, "The intended purpose of establishing a social media presence is to disseminate City information deemed useful to its citizens." Has this purpose been broadened recently with the addition of crowdsourcing? And is there a need that could be filled with online social media to promote platforms for feedback and dialogue between city employees/officials and the public?

**A1: The City is always looking to expand forums for feedback and interaction with residents, and the crowdsourcing function on worcesterma.gov is a new avenue in that effort. Social media in general has provided that forum as well, both allowing the City to disseminate information and also to collect resident input. For example, during the recent winter storm the City put out information about DPW's plans for treating the roads, and also took complaints/requests for service directly from social media. Streets that residents said needed work were collected and put into the DPW customer service database for further review and action.**

**Q2: Choice of social media presence and platforms.** What are the criteria or guidance for the City Manager or his designee's approval of Department's social media use? Who decides which Departments use which platforms and what guides those decisions?

**A2: The decision to create a new official social media account typically arises from the individual department or division, which submits a request to the City Manager's Office for review. The Chief of Staff, Communications Specialist, and Division of Technical Services decide whether the account should be allowed. The decision is based on a number of factors, including whether the department has a coherent plan for creating content and management of the account, whether it would be duplicative of existing social media accounts, and whether the chosen platform would meaningfully advance the City's efforts to communicate with residents.**

**Q3: Monitoring.** Is there a policy/process for who in each Department, and how frequently they are monitoring their accounts/sites? If so, is there accountability built in, for instance who can the public contact if they have questions or concerns or if they want to appeal those decisions?

**A3: The Division of Technical Services maintains a list of all users who have access to each official social media account. Typically, each account is allowed two users in order to maintain accountability, though in rare cases departments have requested and been granted the ability to add more users. Contact information for individual employees is not posted, but residents can contact the person monitoring the account through each platform's built-in messaging tool.**

**Q4: Violations of the Policy.** What is the threshold for a violation of the policy and what is the standard for what is appropriate?

**4A: As stated in the City’s Social Media Policy:**

- 1. Comments containing, but not limited to, any of the following inappropriate forms of content shall not be permitted on the City of Worcester social media sites and are subject to removal.**
  - a. Comments not related to the original topic**
  - b. Profane, obscene, violent or pornographic content and/or language**
  - c. Content that promotes discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, religion, age, gender or national origin**
  - d. Defamatory or personal attacks**
  - e. Threats**
  - f. Comments relative to political campaigns**
  - g. Solicitation**
  - h. Violations of any federal, state or local law**
  - i. Illegal activity**
- 2. The City of Worcester reserves the right to deny access to the City of Worcester social media sites for any individual who violates the City’s Social Media Policy.**
- 3. Departments shall monitor their social media sites for comments requesting responses from the City and for comments in violation of this policy.**

**Q5: Private v. Official Employee Use.** As stated in the policy, “Employees representing the City of Worcester via the City’s social media sites must conduct themselves at all times as a representative of the City and in accordance with all City policies.” Does the City’s online social media policy apply to city employees (teachers, police officers, etc.) using their individual social media accounts/sites when City matters are being discussed? Does this vary by Department, or position? How would the City determine if the employee was speaking in an official capacity blurring lines of using accounts/sites in an official capacity?

**A5: The City does not have any official policy on personal social media accounts. City employees are expected to conduct themselves in a manner befitting a representative of the City at all times, on the job or off.**

**Q6: WPD and Posting of Addresses of Alleged Perpetrators of Crimes.** What is the purpose of listing the addresses of alleged perpetrators of crimes on the Worcester Police Department social media sites? It does not appear that every arrest is posted so who decides what arrests get posted? Is there a policy/process around those decisions? And if so, what are the parameters or criteria used for making those decisions?

**A6: WPD posts their press releases on both Facebook and Twitter. Staff in the Chief’s office handle the media requests and in turn post on social media. Press releases are generated for newsworthiness to alert the public of public safety concerns as well as to answer questions sought by the media. The information in the press release is a matter of public record and it is helpful to include addresses next to the name to more accurately identify the person arrested from someone else with the same name in the community as well as to alert the public of what has happened in various neighborhoods.**

**Discussion:**

- Concerns were raised about posted addresses as it could put people at risk and addresses of record may not be the actual residence of the person arrested because many people are transient. Are we making our community healthier and safer by posting?
- What is the impact of the accessibility and availability of this data on people’s reality on a day to day?

- Are we casting aspersions on people who are innocent until proven guilty? It is easy to post when there are arrests but the public are not likely to follow up to see if that person was actually found guilty.
- There are pros and cons of posting only the name with age or only the address

The Commission will invite the WPD to the HRC meeting in March or April to further discuss.

**B. Discussion of Worcester Police Department’s use of social media to post names and addresses of arrested persons**

Sean catalogued the WPD Facebook posts for arrests from 8/26/2015- 12/26/2015. He concluded that there does not seem to be a specific crime or neighborhood that triggers the posting. The postings were pretty random. One piece of information that was missing and might be interesting to see is the race of the persons posted for arrests on Facebook.

There was another person listed in the fee for sex arrests but was removed. He discovered this by reading the comments and he could not determine why they were removed but wondered if there was a process to remove someone and what were the criteria?

**C. Review brochure *Participation in Municipal Meetings***

In an effort to increase and enhance public participation in municipal meetings Jayna presented a draft brochure for review by the Commission. The brochure is meant to be a guide to participation in public meetings (City Council, School Committee and Boards and Commissions). The Commission offered comments and edits.

**D. Review African churches outreach list**

Jayna shared a draft listing of churches with predominantly African worshipers and sought the Commission’s assistance in identifying other faith organizations. The Commission offered suggestions of people to contact in the community.

5. **Commissioners Report:** None
6. **Location of Next Meeting (February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016):** Veterans Inc., 69 Grove Street
7. **Public Comment** (3 minutes per individual): John Provost shared information about World Toilet Day
8. **Adjournment:** 8:03pm