

Chairperson
Aaron Richman



Members:
Shawna Curran
Lilian Chukwurah
Izaida Gonzalez
Robyn Kennedy
Elizabeth O'Callahan
Edward G. Robinson

Vice-chairperson
Cara Berg Powers

**City of Worcester
Human Rights Commission**

**Monthly Meeting Summary– Monday March 6th, 2017, 6pm
Worcester City Hall, Levi Lincoln Chamber (3rd Flr)**

Members Present: Shawna Curran, Lilian Chukwurah, Izaida Gonzalez, Robyn Kennedy, Elizabeth O'Callahan, Aaron Richman, Edward G. Robinson

Members Absent: Cara Berg Powers

Staff Present: Jayna Turchek

1. Call to order and introductions:

A quorum was established and Chairperson Aaron Richman called the meeting to order at 6:42pm. Commissioners and staff briefly introduced themselves. Commissioner Ike McBride has resigned from the Commission, as he could not make a commitment to attend with regularity due to work and other obligations. The Commission thanked him for his service and for all he does every day to make our city great.

2. Approval of February 6th, 2016 meeting minutes

Commissioner Kennedy motioned to approve the minutes as written. Commissioner Curran seconded. Unanimously approved as written.

3. Approval of Subcommittee on Dialogues on Race minutes February 8th, 2017, December 22nd, 2015, December 3rd, 2015, November 18th, 2015

Commissioner Kennedy motioned to approve as written the minutes from the whole of the above listed meeting dates. Commissioner Gonzalez seconded. Unanimously approved as written. Commissioner Chukwurah motioned for the larger Commission to accept the whole of the Subcommittee's minutes. Commissioner O'Callahan seconded. Unanimously approved as written.

4. New Business

A. Update and recommendations from Subcommittee on the Dialogues on Race

Commissioner Curran addressed the Commission on behalf of the Subcommittee on the Dialogues on Race. The Subcommittee presented a draft 2017-2018 Plan for the Human Rights Commission. The Subcommittee also proposed to dissolve the Subcommittee on the basis that it had completed its stated goal, that of reviewing the race dialogues notes and subsequently proposing recommendations for the Commission. The running theme of the dialogue notes was that of addressing police-



OFFICE OF HUMAN RIGHTS & DISABILITIES, CITY HALL ROOM 101
455 MAIN ST., WORCESTER, MA 01608
TELEPHONE (508) 799-8486 | FAX (508) 799-1218



community relations, and Curran, on behalf of the Subcommittee, proposed that this be the goal guiding the Commission's work for the upcoming year.

The areas of focus outlines in the plan include: Bureau of Professional Standards (BOPS) reporting, public safety, and the City's social media policy. Commissioner Curran also proposed an annual public hearing for the Commission. This hearing will include the sharing of stats on hate crimes, what the city does to respond, define what constitutes a hate crime so that people understand what is and is not a hate crime, hear from the Coalition Against Bias and Hate regarding the Attorney General's hotline activity report and hear from the community at large. All of this information will then be collected and organized in to a report.

Chairperson Richman assured the Commission that this workplan, although it constitutes a plan over time, would not be to the exclusion of other issues that require attention and energy over the course of the year.

Commissioner O'Callahan inquired as to the types of statistics that are available. Director Turchek answered that the hate crimes reporting can be found at the MA Office of Public Safety website.

Chairperson mentioned that a few members of the Commission met with the Captain of the BOPS and new Chief of Police for the WPD for an initial informal meeting to discuss the BOPS, and found that both of these members of the WPD to be very open and expressed willingness to work together. Chairperson Richman noted that the police examination is every other year. This year it is happening in a couple of weeks. Knowing it will happen again in two years, Richman argued that it is important to think about ways to spread awareness about the exam and to possibly put programs in place to help people who may be interested but need help to succeed.

B. Review statement in support of our Muslim residents: Tabled

Statement not available. If any Commissioner member has ideas for language please share with Director Turchek between now and the next meeting.

C. Proposals for Citizen Advisory Council

These are considerations for actions that the Commission may recommend that the Citizen Advisory Council (CAC) undertake:

- i. Change the name from the Citizen Advisory Council to the Community Advisory Council
- ii. Change rules to replace registered voter requirement with residency and age requirement
- iii. Request LGBTQIA identification to be included on the list of identities for the voluntary self-identification for community members.

Commissioner Chukwurah stated her support for all of these recommendations, and argued that since each board is set up to serve the community, and that each member of the community is affected by the decisions of the boards and commissions of the City, it is important that the Advisory Council be inclusive for as many people as possible. Commissioner O'Callahan recommends amending the removal of the voter requirement, to continue to support immigrant community involvement in the City.

Director Turchek stated that, of i. this would require a Charter change. Of number ii., the requirement of all boards that you must be a registered voter is a rule that could be changed by the CAC. Of number iii., on the application for boards and commissions, there is a voluntary self-identification disclosure which does not include the LGBTQIA.

Commissioner Kennedy offered that the Commission should act to point out to the CAC that some of their requirements may be prohibitive and that in the end the CAC will be the one to take up the discussion and eventually the decision to adopt these recommendations or not.

Commissioner O'Callahan motioned to add/clarify to the recommendations:

1. Add a third gender identification option with a write-in ability that is not M or F;
2. And also a space on the application so that LGBTQIA members could also further elaborate their status, all of which would be on a voluntary basis.

Commissioner Gonzalez motioned to move forward with the respectful request for consideration to adopt the three recommendations along with the additions from Commissioner O'Callahan to the Citizen Advisory Council as outlined above. Commissioner Robinson seconded and it was unanimously agreed.

Commissioner Robinson also suggested we could talk about what pronouns the applicants prefer. Commissioner Chukwurah seconds. Unanimously agreed.

D. Proposal: Open mic- Immigration stories

Director Turchek proposed that an open mic event for immigrants to share their stories, allowing people the space to talk with pride about their own or their family's immigrant stories and also provide an educational space to bring the community together. Turchek proposes that this could be something the Commission could champion. The Commission agreed that a further discussion of this event be put on the April agenda.

E. Proposal: April Fair Housing Series

Director Turchek informed the Commission that April is Fair Housing Month, and shared that the Commission has a tradition of having fair housing trainings during the April meeting. Turchek also informed the Commission that downtown Worcester is witnessing the turnover of apartment buildings downtown from low or subsidized-income renters to more luxury apartments and individuals and families are experiencing rising rents and evictions. Director Turchek proposed that the Commission hold a series in April where, in two or three Commission meetings, the Commission and community members receive a training focused on affordable housing and fair housing.

It was agreed that these trainings are to be scheduled in the coming month.

5. Discussion for ban on conversion therapy in City of Worcester

Commissioner Robinson turned the Commission's attention to Massachusetts Bill, Docket #1606, and inquired as to whether the Commission could officially sign on to this bill. He also asked whether the Commission could work with the city solicitor if the state does not pass this conversion ban. Jayna provided the Commission with a sample language template. Chairperson Richman wanted the Commission to send a proactive statement to the City Manager's office.

Jeremy Darling, Licensed Mental Health Clinician from the Island Counseling Center, stated that the legislation, as is, is specifically targeted at protecting minors. Conversion therapy, under this ban, could not be addressed to anyone under 18 years old. Darling pointed out that it does indeed have language regarding gender expression. The ban should include vulnerable adults, or a person above 18 over whom another adult retains court-ordered control. According to Darling, the Ethics

supervisor for state was not aware of any instances of open conversion therapy in Massachusetts. Darling also established that he believes it would be helpful to include other non-licensed individuals. For example, the term Psychotherapist is not a protected term. Therefore, a phrase such as: “Plus anyone providing psycho-therapeutic services” would be highly useful to include in the ban. Commissioner O’Callahan asked whether or not a behavioral specialist is a protected term in Massachusetts, and Darling responded that adding to the ban anyone who performs any form of “behavioral modification” as well.

Commissioner Kennedy argued that the Commission should make a statement opposing conversion therapy, and supporting a ban, be it at the state-level or the city-level. Bans may not be successful on their own, but rather, require a parallel awareness campaign. This campaign is something that the Commission could take on. Commissioner Kennedy motioned for the Commission to first declare opposition for conversion therapy and use in city in the form of a statement, and to further request Director Turchek to work with all relevant Departments and the City Manager’s office to prevent all forms of conversion therapy. Commissioner O’Callahan seconded. Unanimously agreed.

6. Review draft FY16 annual report to the city manager: Tabled.

7. Location of next meeting (April 3rd, 2017): City Hall, Esther Howland Chamber

Director Turchek will follow up to schedule additional meeting date and time for trainings.

8. Public comment

William S. Coleman III advised that public comment be adjusted to be mixed into Commission meetings. He also recommends that the City Charter change for establishment of Non-citizen Advisory Committee. Recommends joint committee meeting between the Commission and the Department of Public Health. The City of Worcester is a city of immigrants: the Armenian, Swedish, Latino and Ghanaian communities all have a lot of stories. Mr. Coleman also argued that the City Council take a vote on sanctuary cities.

Jeremy Darling asked the Commission if they were talking about legal status or gender pronouns? Forms on transgender: he can list of 8 genders. If you do a M-F and F-M you will not represent all LGBTQIA peoples. In order to support LGBTQIA members of the community, use a checkbox with a specifier.

9. Adjournment: 8:19PM