

**Chairperson**  
Aaron Richman



**Members:**

Lilian Chukwurah  
Izaida Gonzalez  
Robyn Kennedy  
Edward G. Robinson  
Elizabeth O'Callahan

**Vice-chairperson**  
Cara Berg Powers

**City of Worcester  
Human Rights Commission**

**Monthly Meeting Summary – Monday July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017, 6pm  
Worcester City Hall, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, 455 Main St., Worcester, MA**

**Members Present:** Aaron Richman, Cara Berg Powers, Izaida Gonzalez, Lilian Chukwurah, Edward G. Robinson, Elizabeth O'Callahan

**Members Absent:** Robyn Kennedy

**Staff Present:** Jayna Turchek, and Kathy Esparza

- 1. Call to Order:** A quorum was established and Vice-Chairperson Cara Berg Powers called the meeting to order at 6:06pm. The Vice-Chairperson welcomed the Commissioners and those present, Commissioners, and staff, briefly introduced themselves.
- 2. Approval of June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017 meeting minutes:**  
Commissioner Robinson motioned to approve the minutes pending amendment to change that Commissioner Chukwurah was present at June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017 meeting. Commissioner Gonzalez seconded. Unanimously approved written with pending amendment.
- 3. Critical Media Literacy Workshop:**  
Vice-Chairperson Cara Berg Powers also Executive Director of the Transformation Cultural Project – an organization that works with classrooms and communities to create new opportunities for artists to build economic and social power through their art. (See website for more information: <https://www.tcproject.org/>)

**Highlights from Workshop:**

- ✓ Employing a critical media literacy lens aids folks not only to read or listen to media pieces but to comprehend and consciously think about the meaning of what we consume
- ✓ Key questions for media literacy:
  - Who is the author and what is the purpose?
  - What techniques are used to attract and hold your attention?
  - What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented?
  - How might different people interpret the message?



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



- What is omitted from the message?

- ✓ There is no such thing as someone being unbiased: people bring their biases and lived experiences when creating and consuming media.
- ✓ Pop Cultural Media (films and TV) are where we get our greatest cultural consensus and the current societal norms.
- ✓ Advertising is the most explicit kind of media intentionally focused on selling and trying to push ‘cultural consensus’
- ✓ News is probably the easiest yet hardest media to dismantle and analyze its messaging construction.
- ✓ News are “the regime of the effective we”, basically meaning that news are perceived as an authority, although there has been a breakdown in the past 10 years, there is still a believe that news are ‘neutral’ or ‘unbiased’ – which is not true because there isn’t such a thing
- ✓ Bias and framing:
  - Framing can falsely set someone up. When consuming medias, it is important to ask ourselves what information is included, what perspectives are included – what’s inside the image, what’s outside the image.
  - Most of us think that what happens in the world is how media portrays it
  - To check for framing, always ask 3 questions: What’s missing? What’s included? Who decided that?
  - Power influences the way media is created – it can either reinforce or disrupt the status quo
  - Media impacts our lives, informs policy, and the ways we think

**Public comment:** Recently moved to Worcester and she is interested in how media portrays the community from Framingham – where she is from. She also thought the workshop was interested and offered ways in how to assess media.

#### **4. Assign tasks for the public safety work plan**

Director Turchek stated that this is an opportunity to brainstorm ideas to keep up with the commission’s annual plan. The Commission decided, based on the recommendations from the subcommittee, to work on community- police relations and break the work into quarters this year

1<sup>st</sup> – Looking at BOPS, offering firm recommendations, and utilizing an accessible format

2<sup>nd</sup> – Public safety /Police community relations (we are in this quarter)

3<sup>rd</sup> – Social media

4<sup>th</sup> – Annual forum in February 2018 (To review the hate crimes reported through the Attorney General’s hotline as well as reports from BOPS)

Director Turchek also attached a copy of Worcester’s updated crime watch meetings in case the commission wants to continue with the work of attending meetings.

Discussion:

Meetings are neighborhood-initiated with a neighborhood convener, an assigned WPD officer, staff from the City Manager Office, and the District City Councilor normally attends. Additionally, Crime Watch meetings have different formats, some are formal others are informal.

Vice-Chairperson Berg Powers stated that she put together a proposal around crime watch meetings and it focused on understanding how crime watch meetings are framed and how community engage with these spaces. Vice-Chairperson Berg Powers stated she is interested in:

- Attending these meetings to look how they work, their makeup, and their discussions
- Research best practices or case studies for how to create a list resources to enhance the way crime watch meetings are organized and framed
- Creation of recommendations for groups/action guide: including demographics, ten top topics discussed, and a set of tools to enhance facilitation and other aspects of these meetings.

Commissioner O' Callahan proposed that commissioners attend crime watch meetings in their respective neighborhoods to get a sense of what's happening

Chairperson Richman suggested developing and sending a survey to crime watch meeting leaders to ask what do they think about commission's proposal and what would they like to see. Additionally, he asked if commissioners could commit to attend at least one of the crime watch meetings this quarter.

Vice-Chairperson Berg Powers requested a map of crime watch meetings in each district. Additionally, she suggested we create a survey that can be shared on City of Worcester social media to ask community members the following questions:

- Have you been to a community watch meeting before? Why? Why not?
- What would you like to get out attending these meetings?
- Any barriers? What would make it easier?

Follow up:

1. Commissioner O'Callahan will create a 1-pager to rate meetings and write observations
2. Commissioners O'Callahan and Berg Powers and OHRD will develop questions and survey
3. Rest of Commissioner will commit to attend meetings & reach out to folks who run crime watch meetings

Future discussion:

Commissioner Robinson asked Director Turchek knows if there is a Department in the WPD that deals with hate crimes. Commissioner Gonzalez suggested to have additional trainings to understand the definition of hate crime and the guidelines that WPD utilizes to understand and deal with hate crimes

**4. Review annual report to the city manager**

Chairperson Richman asked for clarification on petitioner DaPale request regarding ban on conversion therapy. Chairperson Richman stated that he recalls commission making a request to City Solicitors Office for potential language for policy recommendation. Additionally, Chairperson requested to include this action item on annual report. Vice-Chairperson Berg Powers motioned to approve annual report with

amendment. Commissioner Gonzalez seconded. Unanimously approved written with pending amendment.

**5. Election of office – 3 officer roles**

Chairman Richman stated that there are three officer roles openings:

- Clerk
- Vice-Chairperson
- Chairperson

Commissioner O’Callahan self-nominated to serve as clerk. Vice-Chairperson Berg Powers nominated Chairperson Richman to serve as chairperson and he accepted. Commissioner Chukwurah nominated Vice-Chairperson Berg Powers to serve as vice chairperson and she accepted.

Chairperson Richman motioned to approve the slate as stated. Commissioner Gonzalez seconded. Director Turchek called for a roll call to approve motion to approve the slate as stated: all in favor—opposed none. The new/remaining officers will start their roles in August 2017.

**6. Next meeting location: 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, Esther Howland Chamber**

**7. Adjournment at 8:02pm**