

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 September 11th, 2017, 6pm
Worcester City Hall, Levi Lincoln Chamber, 455 Main St., Worcester, MA**

Members Present: Aaron Richman, Cara Berg Powers, Robyn Kennedy, Lilian Chukwurah,
Edward G. Robinson, Elizabeth O'Callahan

Members Absent: Izaida Gonzalez

Staff Present: Jayna Turcek and Kathy Esparza

1. Call to Order

A quorum was established and Chairperson Aaron Richman called the meeting to order at 6:16pm. The Chairperson welcomed the Commissioners and those present. Commissioners and staff briefly introduced themselves. A moment of silence was observed in remembrance of those lost in the 2001 attack on the World Trade Center.

2. Approval of August 7th, 2017 meeting minutes

Commissioner Kennedy motioned to approve the minutes as written. Commissioner Robinson seconded. Approved as written with Commissioner Berg Powers abstaining (6-0-1).

3. New Business:

A. Conversation with WPD LGBTQIA Officer McQueen

Commissioners were joined by the Worcester Police Department's LGBTQ Liaison Officer, Sharon McQueen. Officer McQueen outlined the philosophy and goals of the position within the police department, as well as her recent undertakings that make Worcester a safer, more inclusive community.

Philosophy: Law enforcement has a lot in common with LGBTQIA

- Both deal with stereotypes and share similar concerns (e.g. disclosing status to others)
- Each has their own community identity discussion boards, language, flags

Goals of the LGBTQ Liaison Position:

- To create dialogue and trust between both groups of people
- Make police more comfortable with LGBTQ community and vice-versa

Training for "Communities that share an interest"

- Objectives: Promote understanding between the two communities



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- Outcome: Made those in both groups more comfortable asking questions about the other

Recent Outreach Efforts:

- Reached out to Mental health counselors advertising as safe for LGBTQ clients
 - Let them know if a client is a victim of a crime, she can provide assistance
- Involvement with Worcester Pride, LGBTQ Youth
- Works with DCF providing guidance on language, best practices, and making referrals
- Collaboration with religious organizations - on behalf of WPD and LGBTQ community
- Future work: Training for college campus police
- Reached out to other local police departments and other LGBTQ liaison officers
- Attend other pride events in other municipalities- promote communication & connection

Department efforts:

- Already in place transgender policy- Guidelines on pronouns, respectful treatment of people in custody
- Officer McQueen affirmed the WPD's commitment to openness and explained that complaints against the department would be referred to the Bureau of Professional Standards

B. Outreach plan for city neighborhood watch meetings

Kathy Esparza provided an update on the current initiative on the city's neighborhood watch meetings, with new information from an interview with Lieutenant David Doherty and Officer Sean Lovely from WPD:

- Background information for how meetings are framed
- Changed name to neighborhood meetings
- Meetings often attended by inspectional services, city councilors and state representatives
- A City-wide meeting is being organized for October 18th, 2017 at the Worcester Senior Center
- Neighborhood Response Team

Chairperson Richman and Commissioner Robinson shared observations about meetings they attended. Both meetings were structured and well-attended. Chairperson Richman described his meeting as an opportunity to meet needs and an overall positive experience. Commissioner Robinson submitted a written copy of his notes from the meeting.

In response to Commissioner questions, Ms. Esparza clarified that officers at the meetings are responsible for following through to resolve complaints that are raised at each meeting.

Vice-Chair Berg Powers posited that more resources would give people more agency to build community, and asked if it were possible to reach out to city councilors regarding their attendance

In regard to Commissioner attendance of meetings, Director Turchek asked commissioners to send a follow up email on which meetings each commissioner will plan to attend, with the plan to attend at least one meeting in every district. Commissioners will plan to attend at least one meeting before the HRC Meeting in October, and send notes to Director Turchek and Kathy Esparza prior to October meeting. Clerk O'Callahan agreed to update the field note forms for Commissioners to use.

C. Immigrants' rights video: family planning

Kathy Esparza shared a video resource for parents on planning for emergencies and talking to their children about immigration. The original video played in Spanish with English subtitles, and is being translated into Vietnamese, Portuguese, Arabic, Nepali, Albanian and Thui. Printed versions of cards from the video are being made available in Worcester Public Schools. The video is being shared with staff in the Worcester Public Schools, on the Cable Access Channel, on the page for the Office of Human Rights and Disabilities, and on the City of Worcester Facebook Page and Youtube Channel.

Director Turchek clarified that there is a protocol around ICE in Worcester Public Schools. Although there, is no written policy, she will look into whether there is a current or specific request for one.

4. Old Business:

A. Update on Trial of American Slavery event

Cedric Arnold was invited back to provide an update to the Commission on the planned mock Trial of Frederick Douglas. Mr. Arnold expressed disappointment over an earlier miscommunication with the Office of Human Rights, and let the Commission know that the date and location would be changing. Director Turchek clarified the office's intentions and need for communication with other city departments. Responding to Mr. Arnold's desire to pause the partnership, Director Turchek apologized for the misunderstanding, expressed a hope for Mr. Arnold's success and communicated a desire to continue to working to support his effort, should he reconsider. The Commission invited Mr. Arnold back again in October to resume discussion at his discretion.

B. Review assignments for police community relations work plan

Due to limitations on time, Chairperson Richman asked to hold this item for the October meeting

C. Review of proposed definitions for racism, discrimination and health equity as approved and forwarded by the Partnership for Racial and Health Equity and amended by Commission on Disability

Director Turchek gave an update on a development regarding the review of definitions for racism, discrimination and health equity, and asked the Commission to hold this agenda item pending an update from the Commission on Disabilities

Vice-Chair Berg Powers motioned to continue the discussion at the October meeting. Commissioner Kennedy requested to send a list of noted spelling errors to Director Turchek and seconded the motion.

Unanimously approved.

5. Public Comment:

The Commission heard from Cotey Collins, a member of the public applying to join the Human Rights Commission. Mr. Collins will appear before the CAC in October. Chairperson wished Mr. Collins good luck and expressed hope that he would be joining the commission in the coming months. Commissioner Robinson stated that Chairperson Richman could make a written recommendation, at his discretion, to the CAC for Mr. Collins approval.

6. Location of next meeting (October 2nd, 2017): City Hall, Esther Howland Chamber

7. Adjournment at 8:02pm