

**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 October 2nd, 2017, 6pm  
Worcester City Hall, 4th Floor, 455 Main St., Worcester, MA**

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

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

**1. Call to Order and Introductions**

A quorum was established and Chairperson Aaron Richman called the meeting to order at 6:35pm. Commissioners introduced themselves and the Chairperson welcomed the Commissioners and those present. Chairperson Richman acknowledged the tragedy in Las Vegas and the immense loss of life. For every 1 person lost to gun violence, 100 people who knew person well are profoundly affected; for the 58 people lost today, 5800 people are devastated.

**2. Approval of September 11th, 2017 meeting minutes**

Vice-Chairperson Berg Powers motioned to approve the minutes as written. Commissioner Kennedy seconded. Commissioner Gonzalez requested to amend the minutes to record her as absent. Unanimously approved with proposed amendment.

**3. New Business:**

**A. Today's observances:**

**Child Health Day** -Chairperson Richman read United States Federal Observance Day on Child health

**International Day of Non-violence** - UN Declared back in 2007; Birthday of Mahatma Gandhi.

Chairperson Richman also read a definition of non-violence as a principle rejecting the use of physical violence to enact social and political change. Action, protest and persuasion, non-cooperation and non-violent intervention. "The observance is there and the need is great"

**B. Upcoming observances:**

Director Turchek spoke on upcoming observances

**• Transgender Day of Remembrance- November 20th**



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Commissioner Kennedy asked if the transgender flag was being raised in a ceremony this year, and, if not requested that the Commission investigate the process and make a request. Commissioner Robinson offered to look into details regarding this ceremony and follow up with the Commission.

• **International Human Rights Day – December 10th**

Commissioners inquired about potential events celebrating Human Rights Day. Commissioner Kennedy asked if it would be possible to partner. Chairperson Richman suggested hosting a small public event reading a proclamation or reviewing the theme in a small event to observe Human Rights Day. Director Turchek suggested thinking about some video or media campaign. Vice-Chairperson Berg Powers spoke about putting together a set of questions, asking people to sign up to have living room conversations in their homes and send them back to a web site. She clarified that the format could include a short video sent out via mailing lists and shared on social media. Kathy Esparza added the idea of reaching out to partner with the Youth Commission of the Youth Opportunities Office

Chairperson Richman summarized the action items; with Vice-Chairperson Berg-Powers organizing a 1 minute video and preparing to potentially run a workshop, and Kathy Esparza reaching out to the Youth Opportunities Office.

• **Longest night of the year – December 21st**

Refers to it being the longest and often one of the coldest nights of the year for our homeless population, and as a reminder that there is still a great deal of work to do. The Human Rights office will be reaching out to CHL for more information. Clerk O’Callahan requested the opportunity to learn about local statistics, issues facing Worcester’s homeless population and local initiatives for public involvement.

Vice-Chairperson Berg Powers added that there would be a ceremony raising the **Puerto Rican flag** at Worcester City Hall on Friday, October 6th. Commissioners briefly discussed ways to make information of this nature more widely shared with the general public.

**4. Old Business:**

**A. Outreach plan for city neighborhood watch meetings**

Kathy Esparza provided an additional update on the current initiative on the city’s neighborhood watch meetings. First, the office contacted both students at Quinsigamond Community College and youth from the Hope Coalition to attend Neighborhood Watch Meetings to observe and gather data on behalf of the commission. She also shared information from Commissioner handouts regarding an organization in Lawrence which runs Neighborhood Circles. Neighborhood Circles is a model used to foster community-building conversations.

Chairperson Richman asked Commissioners to continue to attend meetings and share observations as schedules allow. Regarding the timing of meetings, Clerk O’Callahan observed that Tuesday evening meetings largely conflict with City Council meetings, making it unlikely that City Councilors and other members of local government would be unable to attend. This could be something to include in our observations report.

Vice-Chairperson Berg Powers discussed initiatives being implemented in places such as the Neighborhood Health Watch Meetings in Columbus, OH for the consideration of the Commission as something that could be taken on in the future. Kathy Esparza further elaborated on the Neighborhood Circles in Worcester as a similar initiative that could also be replicated throughout the city.

**B. Review assignments for police community relations work plan**

Chairperson Richman discussed recent conversations among Commissioners related to police community relations, and a recent meeting with Police Chief Sergeant and Captain Davenport, who oversees the Bureau of

Professional Standards. Chairperson Richman summarized the request by a member of the public to consider having an annual forum or meeting where information and statistics are shared with the public. Based on discussions among the Commission and requests from members of the public, an invitation was extended to the Worcester Police Department to join the Commission's annual review of its Community Work Plan to share progress and achievements of the last year, as well as updates on challenges the department is still addressing.

Commissioners discussed components of community work plan, including the social media review, evaluation and recommendations. Commissioners asked to meet with the department's social media specialist. Police-Community Relations, including neighborhood watch meetings, diversity and recruitment were also briefly touched upon. The Commission set a goal to review those activities and the work that has been done, as well as a request input from the public during a public hearing in February.

Regarding Sergeant Lopez' recent promotion out of diversity and recruitment, Chairperson Richman shared Chief Sergeant's plan to promote another member of the force into a new full-time position focusing on diversity within the department. Vice-Chairperson Berg Powers questioned the lack of a policy and objective of such a position, stating that adding more officers of color is not enough of a plan, and that the job description should include a detailed plan with measurable objectives. She asked how the department allowed for this new, full-time job in its organizational chart, and why there was not an opportunity for other officers to apply to this new position?

A request was made to look at the department's policies. Commissioner Kennedy asked for an update about hiring on the Chief Diversity Officer position and suggested that the Commission ask the person hired to review those policies. The new Chief Diversity Officer, the Diversity Officer of the Worcester Police Department and the Human Rights Commission could then collaborate to provide a review on which the Commission could base future recommendations. Director Turcek agreed with the importance of ensuring there is additional support for the city's Chief Diversity Officer. She emphasized that this work is not a role for any one person in any department, nor a role for one person for the entire city.

Vice-Chairperson Berg Powers suggested the Chairperson consider initially meeting with the new hire in the police department in a smaller setting for the sake of being efficient with time. Commissioner Kennedy suggested having that individual also come to the spring meeting. Commissioner Robinson requested information regarding how many and what type of community departments are part of the Worcester Police Department during the Spring Meeting. Director Turcek added that the Worcester Police Department released a document called Community Policing Initiative in 2006 – available on WPD's website. She added that this document is helpful as it lays out WPD's structure, its initiatives, and objectives. Director Turcek on behalf of the commission will request an update from the WPD on the progress and the performance measures used to determine the progress of WPD on the community policing initiative.

### **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**

Chairperson Richman directed commissioners to review the document of proposed definitions to be included in the list of definitions. He read aloud the relevant section from the city's Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). He asked Commissioners to spend time before the next meeting reviewing definitions, and, specifically, to think about terms that may be missing. The Commission will discuss at next month's meeting and make recommendations, with the plan to potentially add Human Rights Commission endorsement when it is forwarded to City Manager's Office next month. These definitions will be integrated into existing language about equity into mission, vision and strategic plans of CHIP partner organizations.

### **5. Location of next meeting (November 6th, 2017): City Hall, Esther Howland Chamber**

### **6. Adjournment at 8:04pm**