

Chairperson
Aaron Richman

Vice-chairperson
Cara Berg Powers

Clerk
Elizabeth O'Callahan



**City of Worcester
Human Rights Commission**

Members:
Lilian Chukwurah
Robyn Kennedy
Jose Medina Santos
Luis Portillo Reyes
Edward G. Robinson
Jacqueline Yang

**Monthly Meeting Summary – Monday, January 22nd, 2018, 6pm
Worcester City Hall, 4th Floor, 455 Main St., Worcester, MA**

Members Present: Aaron Richman, Robyn Kennedy, Lilian Chukwurah, Elizabeth O'Callahan, Jose Medina Santos, Luis Portillo Reyes, Jacqueline Yang

Staff Present: Jayna Turchek, Kathy Esparza

1. Call to order and introductions

A quorum was established and Chairperson Aaron Richman called the meeting to order at 6:16pm. Commissioners introduced themselves and welcomed new members Jose, Luis and Jacqueline. The Chairperson welcomed the Commissioners and those present.

2. Approval of December 4th, 2017 meeting minutes

Commissioner Kennedy motioned to approve the minutes as written. Commissioner Chukwurah seconded.

New Business:

3A. CAC Meeting attended January 9th

- For new Commissioners, Chairperson Richman first summarized the Human Rights Commission's intent to speak to the CAC regarding its registered voter requirement for candidates seeking to join city boards and commissions.
- In March 2017, the Human Rights Commission examined the CAC's policy on eligible board and commission candidates, and found that the registered voter requirement excluded members of the community who are also profoundly impacted by city board and commission decisions.
- Since the rule is not part of the city's charter, the City Council does not need to vote in order for the Citizen Advisory Council to substitute a residence requirement for the current registered voter requirement. During the August 2017 meeting, Human Rights Commission discussed approaching the Citizen Advisory Council directly to consider making this change.
- Additional information may be found in the March and August 2017 meeting minutes.
- Chairperson Richman updated the Commission on his attendance at the Citizen Advisory Council's January 9th meeting. He stated that part of his argument presented in front of the CAC was that revising the requirement can help address the pervasive issue of widespread vacancies (consistently around 15%) and subsequent difficulties around meetings failing to meet quorum. Chairperson Richman also shared with the HRC that City Councilor Lukes who also attended the CAC meeting objected to the Commission's request stating that she is concerned with the fact that board and commission members have the ability to create city policy.
- The Citizen Advisory Council will consult the city's legal department and review the Commission's request again in March.



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Public Comment: Claire Scobie from Rutland asked, if the CAC doesn't make the change, will the Human Rights Commission speak with city manager directly?

- Chairperson Richman stated that the HRC will continue current dialogue with the CAC before examining other options
- Director Turchek also stated that an important consequence of the HRC bringing this forth is that it allows continued debate and hopefully members of the public attending and participating in city and board meetings will continue to create dialogue and generate interest on this topic

B. In the news: Civil Rights, Housing, and Community Development Organizations Urge HUD Not to Roll Back the Promise of the Fair Housing Act

Director Turchek spoke on a recent HUD decision to roll back regulation that helps municipalities proactively prevent housing discrimination.

- AFFH: An upstream mapping tool for municipalities to analyze patterns and address housing discrimination before it occurs. Allows governments to actively think of policies they can make on a local level to prevent housing discrimination from happening in the first place
- The two year rollback means that government entities receiving HUD funding do not need to report on measures they have taken to affirmatively further fair housing.
- Responding to questions, Commissioner Kennedy articulated the potential consequences of the city not continuing to report, as previously required by AFFH

Motion: Commissioner Kennedy motioned that the Human Rights Commission formally request that the City Manager directs his departments to proceed with carrying out actions previously required under AFFH regulations, and to further ask the City Manager's Director of Economic Development join the Commission at an upcoming meeting to share what that would look like and what actions they are taking

- Commissioner Santos seconded; Motion passed with all in favor

Motion: Clerk O'Callahan motioned to affirm, endorse or sign on as the Human Rights Commission, to the press release sent out by the National Low Income Housing Coalition to urge HUD to reconsider its recent decision on the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Regulation

- Commissioner Santos seconded; Motion passed with all in favor
- Director Turchek will look into the potential to sign onto the press release, either from the City Manager's Office as a municipality, or from the Human Rights Commission as an individual body

Link to Press Release: [http://nlihc.org/article/civil-rights-housing-and-community-development-organizations-urge-hud-not-roll-back-promise?utm_source=NLIHC+All+Subscribers&utm_campaign=2195699a6b-Memo_010818&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_e090383b5e-2195699a6b-291877513&ct=t\(Memo_010818\)](http://nlihc.org/article/civil-rights-housing-and-community-development-organizations-urge-hud-not-roll-back-promise?utm_source=NLIHC+All+Subscribers&utm_campaign=2195699a6b-Memo_010818&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_e090383b5e-2195699a6b-291877513&ct=t(Memo_010818))

Upcoming Fair Housing Events:

- Community Legal Aid provides a presentation on fair housing each April
- Mass Fair Housing and Civil Rights' Conference held in Springfield April 12th and 13th

C. Temporary Protected Status (TPS) expiration, family planning and community support

El Salvador and Haiti: <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/temporary-protected-status>

Henry Hernandez of the Massachusetts TPS Committee (Comité TPS Massachusetts) spoke to the Commission regarding the loss of Temporary Protected Status for individuals from El Salvador and Haiti.

- The group first formed when those from Nicaragua were first to lose TPS last year.
- Began holding assemblies to gain and share information, as well as plan advocacy efforts

- After two previous trips to Washington DC to speak with representatives, the group will meet again February 4th-6th to speak to representatives and meet as National TPS Alliance.
- Advocating for legislation to help pave the path to citizenship

“Although people understood it was temporary, no one realized it would be 18 years, where people would make a life here”

Demographics:

- 5,000 residents in the Boston Area
- Approximately 100 residents in Worcester
- Members of these communities have served in the military, furthered their education, become homeowners, opened businesses; some are parents of American-born children

Local Efforts and Impact:

- 4,000 letters brought to Charlie Baker’s Office last August
- The group so far has worked most closely with Jim McGovern.
- Biggest concerns relate to the ability to renew drivers’ licenses
- Many don’t have or know how to find a path to citizenship

Contact: Comité TPS Massachusetts can be reached on their [Facebook page](#)

Follow Up: Director Turchek will look into requesting for Community Legal Aid to provide training on important information and available resources for those with TPS

Upcoming Event:

Immigration Readiness: How Community Professionals Can Support Immigrant Families

Levi Lincoln Chamber, Worcester City Hall; Feb 27 9-12pm

Hosted by the Worcester Immigrant / Refugee Advocacy Task Force

For more information, contact humanrights@worcesterma.gov, or ABureau@worcesterccc.org

- Immigration Training for Front Door Community Providers
- Training to help community professionals to support immigrant families
- Focus on family planning and preparedness
- Attorneys will be talking through immigration topics (e.g. TPS and DACA)
- Information and referrals available for anyone looking for an attorney
- Know your rights cards available in 6 languages
- Lunch served following the event

Additional Immigration Resources

Anyone with concerns about individual immigration status are encouraged to contact these organizations:

- **Central West Justice Center, an affiliate of Community Legal Aid**
 - Free consultations on immigration questions
 - Free immigration representation for low-income families in Worcester County
 - Available online at www.communitylegal.org or call (855) 252-5342
- **Ascentria Care Alliance**
 - Legal advice, including filling out citizenship forms, green card applications, family petitions, asylum applications, and other visa applications for Massachusetts residents
 - Call (774) 243-3045 or email legalinfo@ascentria.org to schedule an appointment

D. Celebrating Religious Freedom and Traditions- Launch of reference calendar January 24th

- Vice-Chairperson Berg co-facilitating
- Members of the commission and the public invited to join in the Levi Lincoln Chamber 4pm-6pm

E. St. Patrick's Day parade (March 11th, 2018) registration

- The Human Rights Commission will participate in the St. Patrick's Day Parade again this year
- Members planning to attend should contact Director Turchek

4. Old Business:

A. Discussion on MA Bill of Rights for People Experiencing Homelessness (H695/S46)

Motion: Commissioner Kennedy motioned that the Human Rights Commission and the Office of Human Rights and Disabilities, in partnership with the Worcester Department of Human Services submit a joint letter to the Worcester Legislative Delegation encouraging their support and/or co-sponsorship of House Bill 695 and Senate Bill 46, respectively. Clerk O'Callahan seconded; Passed with all in favor

B. Update on city neighborhood watch meetings survey and tour of Lawrence neighborhood circles

Kathy Esparza provided an update on the neighborhood watch meeting surveys.

- Out of 51 monthly meetings around the city, a combination of Commissioners, interns and students have attended 12 neighborhood meetings, and 3 city-wide meetings
- Students at Clark University and Quinsigamond Community College will be assisting HRC with the effort
- Field notes and questionnaires are filled out to collect additional information about each meeting
- An updated list indicating previously attended meetings will be sent out

Update on Neighborhood Circles as a model for best practices:

- Individuals in charge of the Neighborhood Circles initiative in Lawrence are more than happy to host members of the Commission and share their model
- A Delegation of Commissioners can potentially visit during February and March
- Members able to attend should send Kathy Esparza availability by early February

C. Review assignments for police community relations work plan and planning for community meeting

- Meeting date TBD
- Commissioners asked to check availability to plan a second meeting
- Potentially an additional Monday evening meeting in April

5. Location of next meeting (February 5th, 2018): City Hall, Esther Howland Chamber

6. Adjournment at 8:11pm