

Chairperson
Aaron Richman



Members:
Lilian Chukwurah
James Kobialka
Latoya Lewis
Lauren De Oliveira
Deidre Padgett
Edward G. Robinson

Vice-chairperson
Jacqueline Yang

**City of Worcester
Human Rights Commission**

Clerk
Elizabeth O'Callahan

**Monthly Meeting Summary – Monday, October 7th, 2019, 6pm
Worcester City Hall, Room 401, 455 Main St., Worcester, MA**

Members present: Lilian Chukwurah, Latoya Lewis, Elizabeth O'Callahan, Lauren De Oliveira, Deidre Padgett, Aaron Richman, Edward G. Robinson

Members absent: James Kobialka (resigned 10/7/19); Jacqueline Yang

Staff: Jayna Turchek

1. Call to order and introductions

A quorum was established and Chairperson Richman officially called the meeting to order at 6:08 pm. Commissioners and members of the public introduced themselves. The Chairperson welcomed members of the commission, and those present, including members of the public:

John Finn, Worcester resident; Joshua Croke, Worcester resident District 5 and President of Love Your Labels; Philippe Berry, Worcester Resident District 5; Damien Montoya, Mr. Worcester PRIDE 2019; Judi Kirk Director Community Impact with Youth Connect Worcester and chairperson of the Worcester Youth Commission; Brianna Brewer, Worcester resident and Shades by Worcester PRIDE

2. Approval of August 5th, 2019 meeting minutes

Commissioner Robinson motioned to approve the minutes as amended to reflect Commissioner Padgett listed once as absent and Commissioner Chukwurah listed as absent. Commissioner De Oliveira seconded. Motion passed as amended with all in favor.

3. New Business:

A. Review of FY19 activities and calendar/agenda setting for remainder of FY20

Follow up from September meeting discussion and update from “LGBTQ’ing a city” event:

Chairperson Richman and Commissioner Robinson discussed a recent conversation that occurred during a recent panel discussion of LGBTQIA+ initiatives in the city as part of ‘LGBTQ+ Worcester - For the Record’ exhibit at Worcester Historical Museum

- 10 Year Cultural Plan being released; Part of plan - is “LGBTQ’ing a city”
 - Examining “intention vs impact”



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- Group filed intention to create Worcester Queer Coalition

Chairperson Richman invited members of the group to speak

- Philippe Berry expressed gratitude for members of HRC being present and open to listening
- “Space at the table/ feel heard” and spoke about the coalition
- At the Worcester meeting, the group presented the city with a letter of intent as the LGBT Community to form a coalition to represent the diverse voices within the city across a variety of non- profits and individuals, with a goal to improve wellness and lives of residents
- Beginning of a conversation on working together in partnership with the city with intent to establish actionable steps forward to support all members of the LGBTQIA+ community in an equitable, sustainable manner

Resident Joshua Croke read the [letter of intent](#) aloud to commissioners

- This letter is to inform the city of the group’s intent to form a coalition to “represent and advocate for members of the queer community.”

In the letter, the group requests the city to:

1. *“Work with the coalition to identify an acceptable city liaison for the LGBTQIA+ community*
2. *Establish a web page on the city website dedicated to resources and information for the LGBTQIA+ community that is overseen by the liaison*
3. *Invite a representative from the coalition a representative from the coalition to regularly participate on committees, commissions and forums that impact the LGBTQIA+ community”*

Discussion Points

- Currently no full-time paid LGBTQIA+ liaison position exists
- Could city host a webpage directly related to inclusion: to how members of the community are able to access services, and how perspective residents perceive the inclusiveness of the city
- “LGBT life in Worcester is reason I decided to stay in Worcester”
- Damien Montoya explained to members of the Commission that more can be done to support transgender healthcare and ensure equitable access to health services
 - Starting with the premise that healthcare is a human right, why should members of the LGBTQIA+ community have to go to Boston?
 - City Manager Augustus mentioned city can act as convener with UMass and St. Vincent’s to discuss ways to improve
- Although Worcester has a perfect [Municipal Equality Index \(MEI\) score](#), disparities still exist
 - Are there additional, measurable sets of standards for LGBTQIA+ equality?
 - If not, can they be created? What would they look like?
 - Additional literature may be available for review that mention inclusion efforts “Comprehensive 2019 Worcester Construction Workforce Disparity Study,” assessing diversity in city contracts
 - City adopted percentages for construction-related projects for people to bid for and win - adopted higher percentages because of “communities benefits agreement”

What can we do?

- Policy Recommendations
- Education
- Assessment
- Could recommend that relevant voluntary trainings should be made mandatory for city employees
- With LGBTQIA+ community members coming together and moving forward as a group, the Human Rights Commission could assist with helping engage with city government - assist group with joining boards / commissions

Recent Steps taken by the city:

- Adopted and amended Transgender Shelter Survey
- Changed marriage certificate to spouse 1 and spouse 2
- Non-binary licenses are rolling out

Chairperson Richman asked commissioners to think about what work could be taken up for the remainder of FY20 regarding this topic and others and come prepared to discuss at the next meeting.

B. Update Reference Calendar of Religious Observances

- Director Turchek and Chairperson Richman summarized the purpose and creation of the Religious Observances Calendar.
- Commissioners were asked to review the calendar of religious observances and follow up with Director Turchek on any recommended changes.

C. Approve 2020 meeting calendar

- Chairperson Richman asked commissioners to review the draft of the 2020 meeting calendar and follow up with Director Turchek on any specific dates that may be problematic.

D. Planning for winter book and film discussions

- Chairperson Richman asked commissioners to review the book discussion survey
- One recommendation: The 57 Bus by Dashka Slater

4. Old Business:

**A. Status update from public comment from Gordon Davis from August 5th meeting:
Communication shared with Human Resources**

- Director Turchek informed commissioners that Mr. Davis’ public comments from the August 5th Human Rights’ Commission Meeting were shared with Human Resources with a request for a response.

5. Public Comment (See above)

6. Next meeting: Monday November 4th, 2019

7. Adjournment at 8:03 PM