

**Chairperson**  
Aaron Richman

**Vice-chairperson**  
Jacqueline Yang

**Clerk**  
Elizabeth O'Callahan



**City of Worcester  
Human Rights Commission**

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

**Monthly Meeting Summary – Monday February 3, 2020, 6pm  
Worcester City Hall, Room 401**

**Present:** Aaron Richman (late arrival), Jacqueline Yang, Elizabeth O'Callahan, Phillipe Berry, Lilian Chukwurah, Deidre Padgett, Edward G. Robinson

**Absent:** LaToya Lewis and Lauren De Oliviera

**Staff:** Jayna Turchek, Miriam Nyante

**Guests:** James Brooks, Fiona Coughlin, Alyssa Golden

**1. Call to order and introductions**

A quorum was established and Vice Chairperson Yang called the meeting to order at 6:13 pm.

Commissioners and those present introduced themselves. The Chairperson welcomed members of the commission, and those present, including Miriam Nyante, Office of Human Rights and Disabilities, James Brooks, Director Housing Development and Healthy Homes, Fiona Coughlan of Barrett Planning, LLC, and Alyssa Golden of Community Legal Aid

**2. Approval of January 6, 2020 meeting minutes**

Commissioner Chukwurah motioned to approve the minutes as written. Commissioner Robinson seconded. Motion passed with all in favor.

**3. New Business:**

**A. Briefing on upcoming Analysis of Impediments to Housing Report  
(James Brooks, Director Housing Development and Healthy Homes)**

James Brooks, Director Housing Development and Healthy Homes, and Fiona Coughlan with Barrett Planning Group briefed commissioners on the upcoming Analysis of Impediments to Housing Report that is due to be submitted by this Spring.

- \$3 million annual funding received from HUD goes to housing housing-related activities

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- As part of the funding, HUD requires a consolidated plan every 5 years, including an Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing
- Draft due in April for approval in May was started last Summer
- CMRPC did data analytics using 2017 data (most recent data available)
  - Ran out of funding for CMRPC, hired Barrett Consulting through RFP process
- Listening session on 2/10 at 10am and 1pm

#### Survey data included in the Analysis

- 358 survey responses - 50/50 Worcester residents and professionals
- Survey conducted using Survey Monkey and posted on website, circulated via email and social media, worked with cities and towns to distribute
- Higher skip rate among folks not in housing and social service world
- Responses at 50% range were unexpected, indicating lots of groups were struggling

#### How is data gathered

- ACS 5 year estimates
- census data
- Data from Home Mortgage Disclosure Act - snapshot of institution data – Draft PG 35-37
  - Banks are required to report statistics

#### Follow Up:

- Current available survey data does not capture potential disparities or other trends between various demographics.
- Follow up surveys will include specific questions on race/ethnicity, age, socioeconomic status, etc.
- A draft of a follow-up survey will be sent to commissioners to review

### **B. Briefing on Worcester Housing Now Initiative (James Brooks)**

James Brooks provided an overview of the Worcester Housing Now Initiative

The program targets existing housing stock, geared toward 2-4 unit buildings (e.g triple deckers)

- Rationale: Building a new unit takes 2-3 years, but 5-6 months to rehab existing property
- Funding: Community Development Block Grant
- Targeted Areas: Update units in accordance with current Building and Sanitary Codes,
  - Ties into safety to protect emergency personnel
  -

Properties are split into Tiers

- Tier 1- Owner Occupied - will offer more management, maintenance, etc.
  - Includes elders who can't manage tenants or property maintenance
  - Housing Now will develop scope of work, bid projects out, and carry out project management on behalf of owners
- Tier 2- Mom & Pop type landlords who own 3-4 triple deckers
  - Higher level of commitment required
    - They have to give pro-forma on building, 10 year pro-forma
    - Ensure they're paying bills, and house will be safe for next 10 years

- If Owner occupied - required to live there for 10 years
  - 10 year affordability restriction on property
  - Rent to tenants who are less than 80% of area income
- Applications are weighted to favor those who put in to make units accessible as well as ones that need substantial assistance getting properties up to code and livable

Affordability is determined by HUD fair market rents

- Maximum rent that can be charged if all utilities that can be included
- If utilities not included, the formula uses a standardized deduction based on the utility that's taken off maximum rent
- Currently going by 2019 data because the Housing Authority filed an appeal

HUD published fair-market rents for Worcester and they went down from last year

- These numbers have raised widespread concern from those involved in housing
- It is universally understood that rents have gone up in the past year
- Housing Authority is asking HUD to re-evaluate rents

Additional concerns/discussion:

- Accessibility issues still a major concern
- Zoning regulations could be a way to bring more units online
- Look at property tax code to make it blended

### **C. Proposal: Fair Housing Poster Contest, April 16, 2020**

(Miriam Nyante, Housing Discrimination Intake Worker)

Miriam Nyante, Housing Discrimination Intake Worker with the Office of Human Rights and Disabilities, discussed the upcoming Fair Housing Poster Contest with Commissioners

Project proposal: A poster contest in celebration of the anniversary of the Fair Housing Act of 1968 will involve public school children participating in five afterschool programs.

- Part 1 - Judge the posters and announce winners
- Part 2 - celebrate 5:30-6:30 at the Worcester Pop Up

Reviewed the book: The Fair Housing Five and the Haunted House by Sharika Mahdi, Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action

Follow Up:

Commissioners were asked to provide availability and commit to attend if possible

#### **D. Initial discussion on LGBTQIA+ healthcare equity**

Reference Human Rights Campaign Healthcare Equality Index 2019:

[https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/HEI-2019-](https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/HEI-2019-FinalReport.pdf?_ga=2.249590080.715493804.1580315620-1617106697.1570043964)

[FinalReport.pdf?\\_ga=2.249590080.715493804.1580315620-1617106697.1570043964](https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/HEI-2019-FinalReport.pdf?_ga=2.249590080.715493804.1580315620-1617106697.1570043964)

Commissioner Robinson led a discussion on LGBTQIA+ Healthcare Equity

- Only one response: Edward M. Kennedy Center (received 100%)
- Follow up question: Why didn't other hospitals respond?

**Motion:** Commissioner Robinson Motioned to send a letter of congratulations to the Kennedy Center in Great Brook Valley from the Human Rights Commission on their 100% score. Seconded by Clerk O'Callahan. Motion passed with all in favor.

Follow up:

- Commissioner Robinson requested Clerk O'Callahan provide a verbal summary analysis of the criteria for the next meeting.
- Director Turchek will invite them to come speak to the commission

#### **4. Public Comment**

#### **5. Adjournment at 8:05**

**Upcoming Human Rights Commission meeting at 6pm in City Hall Levi Lincoln Chamber  
Monday March 9, 2020:**

1. Discussion on legislation to end child marriage in MA
2. Healthcare Equality Index conversation
3. Presentation by the Worcester Consumer Rights Program

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