



Wednesday, December 6, 2017 8:30am-10am
YWCA of Central MA, 1 Salem Square

Minutes

Call to order – 8:35AM

1. **Attendees:** Joe Bellil, Alexis Travis, Suja Chacko, Mable Millner, Sharon McQueen, Jesse Gibson, Elliot Rivera, Michelle Smith, Ed Karcasinas, Ann Sawyer, Kathy Esparza, Jayna Turчек

Special Guests: Eric Batista and John Genkos (City Manager's Office, City of Worcester)

2. Discussion and sharing of concerns around recent national/local news/events

- a. Mr. Joe Bellil discussed the new tax bill and its impact on disabilities issues. He stated that there will be cuts that will lead to decrease in services such as vocational rehabilitation, and youth programs. Chair Millner agreed with Mr. Bellil and also stated that federal funding cuts are happening across the board in terms of social services. She also emphasized the importance to be more civically engaged.
- b. Director Turчек referred to the supreme court case of Masterpiece Cake and shared that Mayor Petty signed an amicus letter with Mayors against LBGT discrimination:
<https://www.freedomforallamericans.org/lgbtq-non-discrimination-scotus-masterpiece-opentoall/>
- c. Director Turчек also shared a recent article focused on the Worcester Public Schools and racial disparities: <http://www.telegram.com/news/20171203/racial-disparities-persist-in-student-discipline-in-worcester>
- d. Chair Miller mentioned that another big topic at national and local levels is the rise of me too and all the sexual harassment allegations that have been brought to light. Dr. Travis stated that she has heard news regarding people not wanting to hire women due to fear that they will report sexual harassment. Chair Mable also added that another problem is that men are predominantly the ones in decision-making positions.
- e. Chair Millner emphasized the importance to have conversation at all our circles about the sociopolitical climate of our city and nation.
- f. Ms. Chacko stated that the travel ban has been reinstated and its impact on many communities in Worcester, particularly in terms of the communities' mental health. Director Turчек stated that in the most recent refugee consultation meeting, Catholic Charities stated that they are no longer resettling families in Worcester and will close their resettlement program as of December 31st, 2017. Also RIAC and Ascentria had to reduce their staff due to due decreases in funding

and delayed and reduced numbers of arrivals. These agencies don't anticipate new arrivals until April 2018.

3. Update on Worcester Youth Violence Plan

- Eric Batista and John Genkos from the City of Worcester Manager's Office provided an update on the current progress of the Worcester Youth Violence Prevention Initiative. They provided a brief history, as well as an overview of the initiative's strategic plan.
- Following a surge in violence around the city in 2015, the Office of the City Manager conducted an assessment to study its systemic causes. It found that youth from African American and Latinx communities face substantial risk factors that contribute to youth violence, and are disproportionately affected. From this assessment, multiple organizations, institutions, and community members came together to form a coalition. This partnership then began to organize and collaborate on strategies to support youth, and prevent youth violence.
- Over 70 organizations and 150 community members participate under the leadership of local governance. Seven working groups, each with an individual focus, report findings of their monthly meetings to a Planning Committee. The Planning Committee evaluates the findings, collaborates on potential interventions, and reports to the Governance Committee, which oversees the initiative and can effect change at a policy level.
- The multi-organizational alliance focuses on prevention utilizing a comprehensive, trauma-informed approach. Identifying trauma as a major risk factor in later involvement in youth violence, the WYVPI employs strategies to prevent and proactively address the effects of trauma by increasing access to resources for high-risk families, diverting youth from the court system, and pro-actively providing support for victims and witnesses of violence.
- A multi-disciplinary risk team, based on the HUB model out of Scotland, and comprised of several mental health and community agencies, works in partnership with the Worcester Police Department to evaluate the most high-risk cases. This process allows inter-agency cooperation to provide wraparound support as well as to streamline and optimize resources.
- One component that the WYPI is missing is a Community Committee for WYVPI for accountability. Mr. Batista stated that the reason of having presentations like this one is to reach to community members to join the process. The role of this committee will be to participate in strategic planning, review of performance indicators, and provide advice for course correction.
- Mr. Batista also mentioned that in the Relative Rate Index there are still a much higher number of discipline actions taken against black and latinx youth. He also stated that chapter 222 implemented emergency removals which are not counted as suspensions, however, youth are still not allow to come to school which means that they lose that school time.
- Mr. Batista stated that the focus for WYPI year 2 is to implement implicit bias trainings, implement Hub Corp and to develop a community assessment in partnership with the project research project.
- Officer McQueen stated that she is curious to know the rate of recidivism for emergency removals.

- Ms. Sawyer stated that she would like to know the rates of youth violence amongst Asian youth. Mr. Batista stated that based on their data is not significant
- CABH members requested to have Mr. Batista and Mr. Genkos come back to the February meeting to further discuss the WYPI.

4. Proposal and planning for Winter Educational Forum

- Director Turchek shared the working draft for an educational forum that a delegation of CABH members has been working on. She also stated that the goal of this forum is to be a launch for a series of dialogues focused on mentorship, leadership and sponsorship in the workplace for communities of color.
- If anyone is interested in joining the working group, please email Jayna at turchekj@worcesterma.gov or call at 508-799-8486.

5. Input on religious observances calendar

- The Office of Human Rights & Disabilities is drafting a religious observances calendar that will be released in January 2018.
- Director Turchek requested CABH members review the calendar and provide feedback in terms of content. Please send us an email with your feedback to turchekj@worcesterma.gov

6. New Business/Suggestions for upcoming agenda items

- 2018 meetings: February 7th, April 4th, June 6th, August 1st, October 3rd, December 5th