



Wednesday February 7th, 2018 8:30am-10am
YWCA of Central MA, 1 Salem Square

Minutes

Call to order – 8:45AM

1. **Attendees:** Bari Boyer, Maritza Cruz, Joe Bellil, Sharon McQueen, Craig Mortley, Alexis Travis, Jayna Turchek

2. **Discussion and sharing of concerns around recent national/local news/events:**
 - Sharon shared about an initiative on the statewide ballot in Massachusetts in November 2018 that would repeal our state's non-discrimination law ensuring fair and equal treatment for our transgender neighbors, family and friends. A lot of money is reportedly coming in to MA to push this initiative with a national view that if Massachusetts goes a majority of states could soon follow suit. More information can be found here: <https://www.freedommassachusetts.org/> Members discussed possible education campaigns and messaging as soon as the ballot language is published.
 - Craig shared that the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is currently processing a backlog of asylum cases that have been waitlisted for up to 5 years. USCIS is proceeding with a last and first out approach to clear the backlog of longest waiting cases while simultaneously processing cases as they come in as quickly as they can. People in the middle are in somewhat of a limbo; these individuals have work authorization and temporary status while case pending but because of the hold in processing their ability to move on and make other life decisions (ie relocation, pursuing education) is being held up. The problem with having cases that are filed now being processed faster means that many people do not have enough time to prepare and applicants are discouraged from filing skeleton applications (filing without an attorney only with basic information with the hopes of obtaining an attorney later to supplement/complete case filing). The need for more pro bono immigration attorneys was raised.
 - Jayna shared that the hold on processing refugees abroad is partly due to the shift of federal officers to process the asylum cases. Also noteworthy is that Worcester's two refugee resettlement agencies (Ascentria and RIAC) have received significant reduction to their projected arrivals for Fy18 and processing will not pick up and likely will not start to see new arrivals until April.
 - Maritza shared that Puerto Ricans are refugees coming to their own country, many in Worcester living in hotels and FEMA money running out. Lack of affordable housing stock and employment opportunities together with lack of mental health services/practitioners to help them deal with their trauma continues to be an ongoing struggle. We need to continue to talk about Puerto Rico as the media has long since stopped reporting.

- Alexis asked partners to join with DPH on completing and sharing the Community Health Assessment Survey. Worcester DPH is a regional public health department serving Worcester and 6 surrounding towns. The survey is done every three years. Previous assessments have not had a representative sample. They want to truly represent community related to health. DPH team members can come to host sites to hand out surveys and can collect on site. They also have Ipads to complete surveys on site. The survey is in English and will be soon in Spanish, Vietnamese and Arabic. They will wait to see demand for other languages. They are working with Coalition for Healthy Greater Worcester and JSI to assist and conduct community forums and focus groups. Goal is to finish gathering responses by June. A complete assessment is due in August. Please reach out to Alexis to help get the word out and/or host her team to come to your site. Please complete survey: www.surveymonkey.com/r/CHAsurvey2018

3. Winter forum: Community Conversation on Mentorship (March 7th or 12th?)

- Jayna presented proposal from last working group (1/17/2018) to reframe forum as a community conversation on mentorship and its importance in the development and empowerment of leaders from communities of color. Conversation could serve as a catalyst for existing mentorship and leadership development programs to come together, share best practices, gaps and challenges and explore proposals for how to address those gaps. Members questioned what is the intended outcome and what our role would be moving that work forward as well as whether or not this was a topic that furthered the Coalition's stated purpose and objectives.

4. Human Rights Observances Calendar: tabled due to time constraints

5. New Business/Suggestions for upcoming agenda items:

- Joe suggested that we consider hosting a community conversation to share and learn more about concerns around recent national/local news/events similar to what we do every meeting but invite the public. He suggested it could be held at the library and provide opportunity for question and answer with members of the Coalition present who can speak to their work and offer ways for people to be informed and take action.
- Craig also suggested developing a virtual notice board where we could post updates and alerts as we hear about them (ie changes to immigration policy, ballot initiatives and other areas of concern relating to impacts/infringements on our civil/human rights.)
- Maritza suggested the Coalition hold an upcoming member retreat to regroup, redefine and recommit to Coalition goals and workplan in the coming year

6. Member announcements:

YWCA of Central MA: Int'l Women's Day Event Tuesday March 6th, 5-7pm

Keynote speaker: Alejandra Y. Castillo CEO, YWCA USA

City of Worcester Advisory Committee on the Status of Women: Young and Women of Consequence Awards Ceremony with keynote speaker Framingham's first Mayor: Dr. Yvonne Spicer. Thursday March 8th, 5:30-7:30pm, City Hall Levi Lincoln chamber.

RSVP: humanrights@worcesterma.gov

Worcester Division of Public Health: Please complete the 2018 Community Health Assessment Survey and share link: www.surveymonkey.com/r/CHAsurvey2018

Registration open for the Massachusetts 12th Annual Fair Housing and Civil Rights Conference April 12-13, 2018 in Springfield, MA. The Fair Housing and Civil Rights Conference is a FREE two-day symposium featuring workshops, panel discussions, networking and career development opportunities. Workshops are led by distinguished civil rights activists, non-profit leaders, government officials, and world-class trainers. Conference details and registration to the conference are found here: <http://fhcrconference.com/>

See attachments for employment resources and support for Puerto Ricans resettled in Worcester.

7. Next Meeting: April 4th, 2018