

Human Rights Commission
July 12, 2010 Meeting Summary
6:00 -8:00 PM, City Hall, First Floor, Human Resources Conference Room

Present: Cheryl Pope, Chair; Eduardo Rivera, Vice-Chair; Maria Florez, Kathy Gervais, Trinh Huynh, Edward Kwiyup, Mable L. Millner, Edward G. Robinson, Fran Manocchio, staff

Members of the Public: Herbert S. Cremer, resident; David LeBoef and Erin from the Campaign for Affordable Housing

Meeting called to order by Cheryl Pope, Chair at 6:00 pm.

1. June meeting summary approved as submitted.
2. Status of Move to City Hall, Fiscal Year 2011 Budget and Final Performance Measures:
 - Cheryl Pope reported that the move to City Hall, Room 402 is occurred on last Friday. Cheryl stated that phones and fax are not working yet; computers are up and running. There is a lot of work for Fran and our staff to get settled.
3. Ethics Training: Cheryl reminded all Commissioners that the new State Ethics Law requires all employees and volunteers serving on City boards and commissions to take an on-line training course. Trinh completed the on-line course. Edward Kwiyup took course at work and Fran requested that he obtain a copy of the receipt. Human Resources will forward new packet to Maria Florez and Kathy Gervais.
4. Old Business:
 - a. “Know Your Rights”: Fran reported that Himal Jayasekara, Clark University Intern, and Eduardo Rivera will meet with Capt. Jerry O’Rourke and Lt. Fran Assad from the Bureau of Professional Standards, Worcester Police Dept. on July 15th to continue planning the public education component of the “Know Your Rights” campaign. We will request clarification of recent Supreme Court decision relative to Miranda rights.
 - b. Update on Social Justice Roundtable: Cheryl noted that the next meeting of the Social Justice Roundtable will take place on Thursday, July 22, 2010, 5:30 pm at United Way of Central MA.
 - c. Eleanor Hawley Award Work Plan: Unless Fran hears from any Commissioners, she will move ahead with the work plan. She will send Commissioners a list of those individuals/organizations we are outreaching to for nominations. Commissioners will meet on Monday, September 20 to review nominations and select a winner. Award will be given at the December 10th public education program.
 - d. December 10, 2010 – United Nations Declaration of Human Rights Day – Public Education Program: Discussion held regarding possible topics led to the following topics:

- Update on bias and hate laws and enforcement, especially role of U.S. Department of Justice
- Immigration
- Bullying/Conflict resolution
- Rights for specific groups of individuals, such as victims of domestic violence

Commission will finalize the topic at the September 13th meeting.

5. New Business:

- a. Role of the Human Rights Commission regarding Immigration Issues: Highlights of discussion held:
- Education and Protection of the Rights of Immigrants is a responsibility of the HRC
 - This is a positive role for the HRC
 - People, especially newcomers, are not aware of their rights. They may not speak up because of fear of retaliation.

Maria Florez commented that at the recent world-cup soccer games, a banner was on display at stadiums with the words “Say No to Racism”. Others remarked on the impact of increased economic stress due to the recession affects interpersonal relations and may be a factor in increase in hate/bigotry.

- b. Invitation to Dr. Melinda Boone, Superintendent of Schools: Dr. Boone will join us at the August 2, 2010 meeting.

6. Other Business:

- a. Update Human Rights Commission Brochure: Eduardo Rivera proposed updating the HRC brochure (last revised 5 or 6 years ago). Eduardo shared research with Commissioners regarding some protected classes. His recommendations include more specific information and more examples. Upon further discussion, Fran offered to share Massachusetts General Laws with Commissioners. Commissioners agreed that revision of the brochure is in order, but emphasized a “less is more” approach. There is a lot of information (City ordinance, state and federal legislation) and we would like to share the most pertinent information in a capsule version. We can have additional information and links to other resources on our website. (Note: Is it possible to have video/UTube on our website?)

Key question as we embark on this project:

- “What do we stand for?”
- “What’s the nature of our work?”
- “How do we do our work?”

Related to this discussion, questions were raised about our government access channel:

- Can we produce a series of programs (multi-lingual) about human and civil rights?
- Can we run an ad about the services of the Office of Human Rights & Disabilities and the respective Commissions?

Fran will contact the cable services division and report back at August meeting.

7. Public Comment:

a. David LeBeouf, Central Massachusetts Coordinator, and Erin, volunteer coordinator, from the Campaign to Protect *the* Affordable

Housing Law, offered a brief overview of the upcoming ballot question. Background:

- The Massachusetts While it is quite technical, there is a human element.
- The law encourages developers to build affordable housing through a streamlined permitting process and more flexible rules than conventional zoning. This is available to developments that devote at least 20 – 25% of their units to low and moderate income families.
- The law is useful to help cities and towns in the Commonwealth achieve the 10% affordable housing goal, thus ensuring that each community does its fair share to meet the housing needs of its local residents.
- Worcester now has 13.5% affordable housing.

Upon discussion, the Commission voted unanimously to support the Campaign to Protect the Affordable Housing Law. Fran will draft report to City Manager and City Council.

b. Herbert S. Cremer offered the following comments:

- Role of the HRC is to advocate for resident of Worcester, not the global perspective.
- Bullying is broader than school systems and affects many elders.
- Liveries have also been an issue in Lawrence, MA.
- Elders and people with disabilities have rights that should be considered in the revisions of the HRC brochure.

Brief discussion about needs of elders in Worcester. Shall the HRC learn more about this population?

Meeting adjourned at 8:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Fran Manocchio
July 28, 2010