

**City of Worcester
Advisory Committee on the Status of Women
Meeting Minutes**

Tuesday, May 7, 2024

Levi Lincoln Chamber, City Hall, 455 Main Street, Worcester, MA 01608

[Teams Meeting Link](#)

Meeting ID: 227 862 949 380 Passcode: aqf4iN

Call in: 469-998-7682 Access Code: 141 531 054

Spanish subtitles were made available over Teams

Attendance

Members Present: Amaris Gonzalez, Stefanie Silva

Members Present Virtually: Esther Boama-Nyarko, Taylor Rich, Katie Roy

Staff: Samantha Sendrowski

Guests: William Bagley, Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO), City of Worcester

Call to order

Chair Gonzalez called the meeting to order at 5:45 pm. Quorum was established on a roll call (5/0/0). Recognized new member, Stefanie Silva.

Review and approval of March 5, 2024 meeting minutes

Chair Gonzalez made a motion to approve the March 5, 2024 meeting minutes. Vice Chair Rich seconded the motion. Unanimously approved on roll call (5/0/0).

Annual conversation with City of Worcester Chief Human Resources Officer on the status of women in city employment and volunteer opportunities

Question: Can you provide the most updated statistics for employees and board volunteers broken down by gender, race, and leadership? Please identify those that are in executive management positions. What is the change from last year?

Response: Generally, there has been an increase in board participation in the last two years, after a dip during COVID. [Statistics will be posted along with the meeting minutes.]

Question: What are the hiring goals with respect to gender and race for each department? What departments are meeting diversity hiring goals?

Response: The City does not have department-specific quotas. The expectation is that departments will strive to reflect the City we serve. If you take out public safety, and look at the rest of the City, the gender gap is well-balanced, but we still have a lot of work to do. We've hired two recruiters in the City in the last two years.

Question: What is the highest rank for a female in the WFD and WPD? What percentage is female in each department?

Response: The highest ranking in both departments is Lieutenant. In the WFD 7% of employees are female. In the WPD 5% are female.

Question: Do the WFD and WPD both have women diversity officers to assist with recruitment, retention and promotional efforts?

Response: There are dedicated diversity officers in the Police department and Fire department. Diversity officers are not focused solely on gender. Public safety departments have been doing outreach in schools.

Question: Last year you shared that a new vendor, CIRCA, was being used to advertise City positions using a diversity advertising platform. What results have you seen from the use of this vendor?

Response: CIRCA has been a valuable tool to get the word out about the opportunities in the City.

Question: Has there been a change of female applicants (for employment and boards) this year?

Response: There have been 1291 male applicants and 1348 female applicants this year.

Question: What is the rate or number of resignations from employment and volunteer boards broken down by gender for the last 4 years?

Response: Resignations have been even across gender.

Question: Last year you reported the City does not have a termination report that represents gender or race, has one since been developed? If not, could this data be determined from exit surveys/interviews?

Response: A termination report does not exist. Information shared in exit interviews is confidential.

Question from the Public: Do outreach efforts for public safety include colleges and universities in addition to public schools?

Response: Yes, the City has been working with colleges and universities on all types of positions.

Question: Will the city be leaving the civil service? If so, for what departments?

Response: Special legislation has been filed to remove Police Chief and Deputy Chiefs in WFD and WPD from Civil Service. The City is working with unions to remove all non-public safety roles from Civil Service.

Question: Last year you reported the city does not have any childcare benefits/subsidies for employees? Has this changed?

Response: The City does not provide childcare benefits/subsidies, but has rolled out other benefits. They removed parking expenses for employees at City Hall. They added 8 weeks of paid maternity and paternity leave. They provided flexibility for employees with vacation and sick leave, by transitioning to a monthly accrual instead of an annual benefit. Family sick leave was extended from 3 to 5 days, and an option was added to use sick time over 400 hours to care for a family member.

Question: Last year you reported the City had a permanent telework policy. Are there any updates to that policy and its implementation? What type of statistics can you share regarding employees who have been granted/denied approval for remote work? Is a gender breakdown available?

Response: Remote work is at the discretion of the department head. If a role can be conducted remotely, employees can work from home one day a week. Information about breakdown of remote work is not available on a gender level.

Question: What initiatives are planned or contemplated that are gender specific to advance the status of women in the city? Last year you reported the city is developing a Leadership, Training & Development Division that will provide employees with the opportunity to develop skills to prepare them for advancement opportunities as well as leadership skills when they do advance. Can you provide an update on the activities of the division?

Response: The Training and Development Officer retired in 2022. That work will be transitioned to the Equity Office. Human Resources does do a full orientation to all employees, including benefits information and harassment and protected class information. The City also offers leadership training when someone is promoted into management.

Question: How is sexual harassment in the workplace addressed? What kind of training is provided, by whom? How many complaints have been received across all departments in the last four years? What were the dispositions of those complaints and types of remedies provided?

Response: The City has a fully dedicated harassment investigator. There are a number of employees in the HR department who are MCA trained. The Equity Office will have two dedicated investigators.

Question: If an employee is dealing with intimate partner violence, stalking etc what steps should employee take to protect themselves in the workplace? Last year you reported you would look into the creation of a policy on intimate partner violence referencing MGL CH 149, Section 52E and provide notice to employees. Can you provide an update on this activity?

Response: We follow the statute for MGL CH 149. The policy is drafted and will be finalized once reviewed by the Chief Equity Officer.

Question: Last year a concern was raised about job descriptions that refer to comparable experience. Some people do not know what this means and may have it. A question was asked whether there is work being done to review the development of job descriptions so that confusion could be avoided. Your response was that the plan was to wait for the Chief Diversity Officer to come aboard to set the plan. A year has passed and a new CDO has not been hired. Have you changed your approach to how job descriptions are being reviewed?

Response: Human Resources reviews job descriptions as they become available. The City has moved to more skills-based hiring rather than focusing on degrees. The Chief Equity Officer position is in the interview process now and it will be open until filled.

Question: When was the last pay equity study completed and what were the recommendations? Has there been any movement on meeting those recommendations?

Response: The last pay study conducted was in 2019, and none of the recommendations were implemented. The Human Resources department is planning on hiring a Compensation Analyst to look at pay equity on an ongoing basis.

Question: How has the Human Resources Department moved forward on recommendations for action outlined in the Racial Equity Audit?

Response: The Human Resources department has grown from 16 employees in 2021 to 22 employees today. The objective is to provide the full spectrum of services to employees. We're always trying to create objective policies that remove any potential biases. We look forward to working with the Equity Office once it's up and running to continue to build on that work.

Question: What is the paid sick leave policy for new employees? Has that been revised since COVID-19?

Response: The new sick leave policy has made it easier to use sooner. We have taken steps to make sick leave more flexible.

Question from Chair Gonzalez: Have there been any surveys to staff to measure staff morale?

Response: The new benefits rolled out in January, so we are beginning to get ad hoc feedback.

Question from Committee Member Silva: Can an employee take 12-weeks of parental leave?

Response: Yes, the first 8 weeks are paid, and then sick time and vacation time can be used.

Question from Committee Member Rich: How does the City ensure that employees have room for lactation spaces?

Response: Each building in the City have a dedicated space for lactation purposes.

Question from the Public: Does the Intimate Partner Violence policy address scenarios where both parties work for the City of Worcester?

Response: The policy does not cover that specific example, but the City would take action on it.

Adjournment at 6:30pm

Next meeting Tuesday June 4, 2024, 5:45pm.

Lead topic: Planning for fiscal year 2025