



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION



Cambridge Human Rights Commission February 1, 2024 Virtual Public Meeting

Present: Chair Judith Laguerre, and Commissioners Olinda Marshall, Josh Stadlan, Stefanie Haug, Mercede Evans, Caroline Palavicino-Maggio, Samuel Myers, Sue Mapel, Beverly Sealey, Stephen Currans

Guest Speaker: Saskia Vann James, Cofounder of Grow to Consume

City Staff: Executive Director Carolina Almonte, Director of Operations Sarah Binney

Members of the public: Susan Redlich and Patricia Illingworth

Absent: Commissioner Yasmin Padamsee Forbes, Superintendent Frederick Cabral

1. Call to Order:

- Chair Laguerre called the meeting to order at 6:02pm.

2. Public Comment

- Two members of the public joined to learn about the process of reparations in Cambridge.

3. Review and approval of March 2024 Minutes

- The Commission reviewed the minutes from the last Commission meeting on January 4, 2024. Commissioner Evans moved to approve the minutes. Commissioner Haug seconded.

4. Presentation – Saskia Vann James, American Freedman Commission

- Vann James presented on the American Freedman Commission, a new Commission which will begin the process of determining reparations for American Freedmen in Cambridge. Vann James discussed the initial step of identifying the harm, what steps can be taken to move towards repair, and the idea of transitional justice — the idea that repair is a process. Vann James explained the difference between race and ethnicity and how recognizing those differences are crucial for dismantling the racial caste system. Commissioners asked questions about the way ethnicity will be taken into account in filling the vacancies on the American Freeman Commission, how reparations interacts with affirmative action, and how the work will navigate harm within and outside of Cambridge city limits. Vann James explained that different Commissions on reparations have had different approaches to the scope of their work, but the Cambridge American Freedman Commission will focus on harm done within the bounds of the City of Cambridge.

5. Staff Reports

- ED report

- ED Almonte reported that the Attorney Investigator position will soon be posted.
- DOO report
 - DOO Binney reported that on March 7, 2024, CHRC, in partnership with the service Center (MSC) will present a symposium for Community Engagement Team (CET) workers and other community advocates. The title of the event is “Overcoming Barriers to Fair Housing.” This symposium will include a presentation from CHRC staff using housing scenarios to help attendees identify discrimination due to race, national origin, source of income, and disability. Ryan McClusky from MSC will provide a workshop on navigating the housing search process.
 - DOO Binney shared that planning for the April Fair Housing Day is underway. The event will be on April 27, 2024 at the Citywide Senior Center.
- Attorney-Investigator Case report
 - ED Almonte shared that she anticipates closing 3 cases in the coming weeks. ED Almonte shared that she has met with a few community members and is working on drafting 2 new housing discrimination complaints based on source of income, a housing discrimination complaint based on sex/sexual orientation, and a housing discrimination complaint based on disability. Commissioner Evans offered to help the new Commissioners with their review of Determinations and Pre-Determination Settlement Agreements. ED Almonte will reach out to the new Commissioners with information about a training in March.

6. **New Business**

- Chair Laguerre moved to shift the co-chair elections to the March meeting due to lack of time. Commissioner Haug seconded.
- Hybrid meetings - Commissioners discussed meeting fully on Zoom if three or fewer commissioners request to meet in-person

7. **Adjournment**

- Chair Laguerre moved to adjourn at 7:45pm, Commissioner Evans seconded.

The next Commission meeting will be on Thursday, March 7, 2024, hybrid at 51 Inman Street and on Zoom.