



# CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

## HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION



### Cambridge Human Rights Commission March 7, 2024 Hybrid Public Meeting

**Present:** Chair Judith Laguerre, and Commissioners Olinda Marshall, Josh Stadlan, Stefanie Haug, Mercedes Evans, Caroline Palavicino-Maggio, Sue Mapel, Beverly Sealey, Stephen Curran, and Yasmin Padamsee Forbes.

City Staff: Executive Director Carolina Almonte, Superintendent Frederick Cabral

**Absent:** Director of Operations Sarah Binney, Commissioner Samuel Myers

#### 1. Call to Order:

- Chair Laguerre called the meeting to order at 6:04pm.

#### 2. Public Comment

- No members of the public joined for public comment.

#### 3. Review and approval of February 2024 Minutes

- The Commission reviewed the minutes from the last Commission meeting on February 1, 2024. Commissioner Curran asked to correct the fact that he was marked present at the last Commission meeting. With that correction, Commissioner Stadlan moved to approve the minutes. Commissioner Evans seconded.

#### 4. Staff Reports

- ED report
  - ED Almonte reported that the Attorney Investigator position will soon be posted.
- Attorney-Investigator Case report
  - ED Almonte shared that recently 9 new complaints were filed with the Commission. Commissioner Stadlan asked how those Complainant's learned of the Commission. ED Almonte said that they informed her that they found CHRC through google searches and from referrals for other City Departments. Commissioner Evans asked if we have received any complaints from new arrivals/immigrants. ED Almonte said some of the new complaints were filed by immigrants (alleging national origin discrimination) but not by new arrivals to Cambridge.

#### 5. New Business

- Co-Chair Elections
  - Chair Laguerre was thanked for her efforts in chairing over the last year. The Commission elected Commissioners Evans and Commission Haug to serve as Co-Chairs for the next year. Commissioner Stadlan moved to approve the vote. Commissioner Padamsee Forbes seconded.
- Event Planning

- **Overcoming Barriers Workshop:** ED Almonte reported that on March 7, 2024, CHRC, in partnership with the Multi-Service Center (MSC), presented a symposium for Community Engagement Team (CET) workers and other community advocates. The title of the event was “Overcoming Barriers to Fair Housing.” This symposium consisted of a presentation from CHRC staff using housing scenarios to help attendees identify discrimination due to national origin/language barriers, source of income, and disability. Ryan McClusky from MSC provided an informative presentation on navigating the housing search process.
- **20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Marriage Equality Celebration:** ED Almonte shared that the Marriage Equality Event is scheduled for May 18, 2024, at City Hall. More details to follow.
- **CIRC Welcome Event:** ED Almonte shared that the Welcome Event is scheduled for May 31, 2024, at the Cambridge Public Library lawn.
- **Fair Housing Month Event** – ED Almonte shared that the Fair Housing Event, “Fair Housing for All,” is scheduled for April 27, 2024, at the Citywide Senior Center.
- **Discussion:** After a discussion about the upcoming events, Commissioners asked various follow up questions. Commissioner Padamsee Forbes asked if community members have difficulties with navigating the housing systems in Cambridge and suggested that our website and intake process should be made easier to navigate and/or more interactive. Commissioner Laguerre mentioned the importance of supporting new immigrants to the City, especially in their native languages. Commissioner Sealey recommended that staff connect with the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO), which is a broad-based, non-partisan, interfaith, multiracial power organization rooted in Greater Boston’s neighborhoods and congregations.
- Commissioner Haug asked staff to inquire about getting someone to speak to the Commission about a “day in the life” of a community member navigating the housing search process. ED Almonte shared that she will contact Cambridge Housing Authority.
- Commissioner Palavicino-Maggio asked about rent control in Cambridge. ED Almonte shared that no rent control has existed since 1994.
- Commissioner Stadlan discussed scams and the impact of scams on community members. Commissioner Stadlan asked if the Consumer Council provides trainings on scams and what to look out for.
- Commissioner Evans provided an update on the Bicycle Commission, and the impact of the Red Line shut down.

## 6. Adjournment

- Chair Laguerre moved to adjourn at 7:10pm, Commissioner Evans seconded.

**The next Commission meeting will be on Thursday, April 4, 2024, hybrid at 51 Inman Street and on Zoom.**