



**Cambridge Human Rights Commission  
Thursday, October 4, 2012**

Present: Commissioners Bonita Cox, Mercedes Evans, Melissa Gonzalez-Brenes, Brendan St. Amant, Randa Shedid, Elaine Angelone, Chanta Bhan, and Adrian Velazquez, staff members Mariah Freark, Colleen Johnston, Vali Buland, and Carmen S. Negrón.

Documents Used: September 2012 minutes.

Meeting was called to order at 6:04 p.m.

**1. Recording of meeting**

No one was recording the meeting.

**2. Public comment**

No members of the public were present for public comment.

**3. Review and Approval of September Minutes**

The September minutes were reviewed and unanimously approved by all Commissioners present.

**4. Executive Director's Report**

Chair Gonzalez-Brenes announced that it was Executive Director Johnston's last Commission meeting. Executive Director Johnston updated Commissioners about cases and stated that the majority of the cases received lately are disability cases. Executive Director Johnston also informed Commissioners that since the parties of the housing case that went to a hearing have not appealed, the case is now officially closed. She thanked the Commissioners who participated in the conciliation and hearing processes, especially Commissioner Evans. Commissioners were wondering why there is a decline in source of income cases. They discussed possible reasons, including that the rents in Cambridge are so high many voucher holders can't look to rent in Cambridge because of the voucher limits.

Executive Director Johnston informed Commissioners of the next MAHRC meeting on Friday, October 19<sup>th</sup>.

The Commissioners thanked Executive Director Johnston for doing such a great job at the Commission, especially as Executive Director, and wished her well on her future endeavors. Executive Director Johnston introduced Vali Buland, an attorney at the city's Law Department who will be Acting Executive Director until a new Executive Director is hired. Ms. Buland stated that she had been Acting Executive Director once before. Ms. Buland informed Commissioners that the Executive Director position has been posted and will close on October 17<sup>th</sup>. She informed the Commissioners that her start date will be October 9<sup>th</sup>.

**5. Discussion of proposed updates to the Rules of Procedure**

Investigator Freark distributed the suggested updates that had been drafted by staff and the Law Department. She explained that most of the changes were based on grammar, style, or clarification. She stated that the major changes had been made where a process was not working, or to bring the Rules into better alignment with the Ordinance. The commissioners unanimously approved the new Rules.

## **6. Update on Probable Cause case**

Commissioners requested an update on the family status housing case that went to hearing. Ms. Buland explained that the Law Department took the case to court and will attempt to collect the monetary judgment. This led to a discussion about outreach, especially as it relates to family status discrimination and lead paint.

## **7. Planning and Goal Setting for 2012-2013**

Chair Gonzalez-Brenes said that Commissioners need to have realistic planning and goal-setting. She stated that sometimes planning sessions have not materialized into actions. Chair Gonzalez-Brenes asked if the process so far was working well for Commissioners. The Commissioners agreed that having the working subcommittee meetings during Commission meeting time was a great idea.

The full Commission discussed the next step regarding the Schools subcommittee. It was agreed that the Commission should discuss what they would like to know from Jim Malone before inviting him back.

Chair Gonzalez-Brenes listed the possible projects Commissioners could be working on:

- the survey the Community Engagement Team(CET) is putting together for immigrant communities will be given this fall, and we should have the results in December which will then be presented at the CET February event;
- the CET outreach worker from the American-Born Black Community requested that CHRC volunteers consider doing the outreach presentation to different churches on Sundays;
- Chair Gonzalez-Brenes asked for volunteers to help staff do the presentations at CLC. Commissioners Shedid, Bhan and Velazquez expressed their interest. Investigator Freark will present the training at the next Commission meeting;
- Chair Gonzalez-Brenes stated that another event in which Commissioners could participate is the annual Fair Housing Month event, which is in its 20th year. She stated that this past April, we had the most Commissioners attend at the Awards Ceremony in recent memory, and hopes that Commissioners will continue this trend and also help organize it.

Chair Gonzalez-Brenes also informed the Commissioners that the Police Department has created a focus group and is requesting participants attend a mock training on October 24<sup>th</sup> from 6-8 p.m. Ms. Buland said she may be able to attend, and Commissioners Gonzalez-Brenes and Bhan said they would go. Commissioner Evans said she might also attend.

Commissioner Bhan brought up the issue of labor rights of workers in the Cambridge area. A discussion was had about these issues, and Chair Gonzalez-Brenes elaborated about her participation at Centro Presente, and encouraged other interested Commissioners to join her in working with Centro Present on these types of issues.

Chair Gonzalez-Brenes asked Commissioners to start thinking of who they would want to nominate as Chair for the January election. She explained that even though she has enjoyed being Chair, she believes it is healthy for organizations to have new leadership.

The meeting adjourned at 7:44 pm.

Next Commission meeting will be held on Thursday, November 1, 2012 at 6:00 p.m.