



**Cambridge Human Rights Commission**  
**Thursday, January 12, 2017**

Present Commissioners: Chanta Bhan, Nadia Davila, Chara Itoka, Nicholas Leydon, Olinda Marshall, Sabrina Selk, Cynthia Orellana, and CHRC Staff Nancy Schlacter, Crystal Rosa, Attorney/Investigator Acloque, and CPD Dept. Supt. Steve DeMarco.

Absent Commissioners: Mercedes Evans and Bonita Cox.

Documents Used:

- December Minutes
- January Agenda
- Draft letter to Senator Mark Montigny

**1. Call to order**

Chair Bhan called the meeting to order at 6:09 p.m. No one was recording the meeting.

**2. Public Comment**

No public comment.

**3. Review and approval of November Minutes**

The Commission reviewed the minutes from the December meeting and approved them unanimously on a motion from Commissioner Orellana, seconded by Commissioner Leydon.

**4. Executive Director's Report**

ED Schlacter updated the Commission on cases, staff activities and outreach. Since the December meeting, no new cases opened, 4 cases pending, 1 case closed because the complainant stopped cooperating with the investigative process. Two pending cases involve housing complaints alleging racial discrimination based on color. One pending case involves housing complaints alleging racial discrimination and national origin discrimination. The fourth pending case involves housing complaints alleging discrimination against a person with a disability. ED Schlacter attended a presentation unveiling a book of reflections by the Community Engagement Team's (CET) American Born Black Outreach Team (ABBOT) of their effort to refocus methods for effective outreach to this particular Cambridge community. ED Schlacter continues her collaboration with CET's Network Event Planning Team (NEPT) for a 2/16/17 event focused on how to outreach effectively to Spanish-speaking communities. CHRC staff continues their collaboration with Community Development Department – Housing Division staff to plan a Fair Housing event in April. ED Schlacter met with Cambridge Savings Bank about providing qualified clients home loans for Lead Abatement. Project Coordinator Rosa completed a 7 part Making Connections outreach training series by the CET. The goal of the training was to provide each outreach worker with tools for how to empower and engage a cultural and linguistically diverse community.

**5. December Meeting Follow Up**

- **Fair Housing Event**

Scheduled Saturday, April 29, 2017, from 10 am - 2 pm, to be located in the CRLS main cafeteria. Housing related organizations have a deadline of January 13, 2017, to submit information regarding their level of participation. CHRC staff will start planning the logistics for the event after the deadline and will start designing the marketing materials for distribution and promotion.

- **Housing Programs in Cambridge**

Commissioners expressed interest regarding Section 8 vouchers and how they work in connection with Cambridge Housing programs. Specifically, Commissioner Cox is interested in understanding voucher portability, i.e. whether a Cambridge resident with a Section 8 voucher can return to Cambridge after they have moved outside of the City to use a voucher. This topic may be scheduled for May if it is not covered during the April Fair Housing event.

- **Speakers on Gentrification**

Commissioners expressed interest regarding a speaker on gentrification, specifically about housing and the small business community in Cambridge. Chris Cotter, Director of Housing, is tentatively scheduled for May or June if the topic is not covered during the April Fair Housing event.

- **Fair Housing Ordinance**

FHO under review by the City Law Dept. to prepare for Home Rule petition to Legislature.

- **Debt-bondage in Cambridge immigrant community**

Deputy Superintendent DeMarco offered to have detectives from the Special Investigations Unit speak to the Commission in February regarding Human Trafficking. The Commission provided Dep. Supt. DeMarco questions to help focus February's presentation.

These questions were provided for consideration:

- What are the demographics of the communities most impacted?
- What is the number of reported cases in the region and received by CPD?
- How are these cases reported?
- What are some warning signs for patrons to be aware of?
- How can private citizens report possible violations?
- How do other agencies become involved or provide services to victims with on-going investigations?
- How can citizens support the work of CPD?

During the December meeting, Chair Bhan distributed House No 4595 Anti-human Trafficking Law (Senate, No. 2461) for the commission to review, however, since that meeting the Bill "died in session." Chair Bhan learned that there is a plan to revive the Bill. Chair Bhan distributed a draft letter requesting Senator Mark Montigny to inform the Commission when the Senate plans to revive the Bill. The Commission reviewed and unanimously approved the letter drafted by Chair Bhan with edits addressed on a motion by Commissioner Leydon, seconded by Commissioner Selk.

## **New Business**

- **Nomination and Vote for CHRC Chair**

Chair Bhan described the expectations of participation for the Chair and Vice Chair roles. The Chair is available to co-interview new members when there are vacancies. The Chair manages meetings to start and end promptly and discusses the meeting with the Executive Director before the meeting. The Chair may be available to review determinations and new members may shadow the Chair when reviewing determinations for training purposes. The Vice Chair participates as a standby when Chair is unavailable.

The members of the Commission were asked if anyone was interested in the nomination. No one was interested and Chair Bhan was willing to continue chairing the monthly meetings. The members of the commission opted for a verbal vote count. Commissioner Selk nominated Chanta Bhan for the role as Chair, and Chair Bhan accepted the nomination. Chair Bhan was reelected by unanimous vote.

Commissioner Davila expressed interest in the role of Vice Chair and nominated herself for the position. The members of the Commission unanimously elected Commissioner Davila as Vice Chair.

- **Outreach possibilities**

ED Schlacter provided a summary of the different ways members of the Commission may participate in outreach to the community on how to file a complaint of discrimination and training for understanding human rights as protected by local, state and federal law.

The Human Rights Commission provides training to English language learners at the Community Learning Center (CLC), organized by interested teachers who invite the Commission to speak to their classes.

ED Schlacter suggested the possibility of partnering with related agencies for conducting outreach. ED Schlacter provided the example of the Commission on Immigrant Rights and Citizenship, which collaborated multiple Know Your Rights trainings with immigrant legal rights organizations for immigrant communities in Cambridge.

Commissioner Leydon suggested the idea of coordinating trainings for local businesses on transgender rights regarding public accommodations, such as access to restrooms. Possible partners for this type of collaborations could be Cambridge Local First, Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD), Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition (MTPC) or other gender justice organizations. This type of training would address the need for awareness given the nationwide discussion on transgender rights. The members of the Commission expressed interest in further developing this idea at the next meeting.

Commissioner Davila moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Orellana.

**Next Commission meeting will be Thursday, February 2, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. in the Large Conference Rm on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Flr.**