



**Cambridge Human Rights Commission  
Thursday, February 7, 2019**

**Present:** Co-Chair Mercedes Evans, Co-Chair Joshua Stadlan, Commissioners Bonita Cox, Sabrina Selk, Olinda Marshall, Kuong Ly, and Michael Kourabas. City Staff: Police Superintendent Steven DeMarco, CHRC Staff: Executive Director Nancy Schlacter and Attorney Investigator Sabrina Acloque, and CHRC Project Coordinator Crystal Rosa

**Absent:** Commissioners. Yasmin Padamsee Forbes, Katie Stack, and Chanta Bhan.

**Documents Used:**

- January Minutes

**1. Call to Order**

Co-Chair Mercedes Evans called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. No public present and no one was recording the meeting.

**2. Review and approval of January Minutes**

The Commission reviewed the minutes from the January 3rd meeting. Commissioner Cox moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Co-Chair Stadlan. Commissioner Selk abstained due to her absence.

**3. Executive Director's Report**

ED Schlacter updated the members of the Commission on cases. Since the January meeting, there have not been any new cases opened, and three of the cases discussed at the previous meeting are still pending. Two cases have closed, and 1 case is in post-cause proceedings. ED Schlacter updated the Commission on staff training and activities. CHRC staff visited the Community Arts Center as a possible venue for the Fair Housing event in April. The planning for the event is in progress. ED Schlacter attended the CET meeting that addressed the stories and challenges of outreach workers within their community. ED Schlacter is assisting with planning another NEPT event on Family Engagement scheduled in February. Attorney Investigator Acloque supervised an intern's three-week clinical internship in January. The intern researched case law under the Federal Fair Housing Act and Americans with Disabilities Act and assisted with a housing discrimination case that included issues intertwined with an employment discrimination case that Complainant had filed at the MCAD. The intern also researched the use of comparator evidence in discrimination cases and analyzed a court opinion regarding discrimination in a place of public accommodation.

**4. January meeting follow up:**

- **Connecticut Human Rights Commission Guidance on Non-discrimination in Hiring Veterans**

Commissioner Ly summarized that the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities created a guide for employers who hire veterans. Commissioner Ly described that policies that impact veterans who receive a less than honorable discharge from the military should also be subject to the jurisdiction of state and local antidiscrimination laws. The most detrimental impact is that a veteran's discharge can be Criminal Offender Record Information.

Attorney Investigator Acloque briefed the Commission on information she gathered regarding the veteran preference hiring practice at the Fire Department. Attorney Investigator Acloque met with the Director of Equity and Inclusion to discuss the matter.

- **“Race: The Power of an Illusion” film showing**

Commissioner Bhan explained through an email to the ED that she had not had the opportunity to address the possible collaboration with Civic Unity because the group has not met yet.

- **Discussion with Deputy Superintendent Carolyn Turk**

ED Schlacter reached out to Deputy Superintendent Carolyn Turk to discuss the Commission's concern of CRLS' efforts addressing racism. ED Schlacter shared a copy of an overview that Dep. Supt. Turk provided. The overview listed various examples of work being done by Cambridge Public School on Equity, Access, and Cultural Proficiency. The Commission requested to have Dep. Supt. Turk present to the Commission. The Commission is specifically interested in knowing how the initiatives trickle down to the students. Co-Chair Evans is interested to know if the students have a way to complain and how CPS is tracking its effectiveness.

## 5. New Business:

- **Update on the Fair Housing Ordinance – still pending**

The Fair Housing Ordinance is still awaiting a legislative ruling on the City's Home Rule petition and therefore has not yet been approved. ED Schlacter spoke to State Rep. Marjorie Decker's Legislative Aide, who explained that the petition can be acted upon for 2-years from the time of filing (August 2018). ED Schlacter will follow up in six months on its status, if it has not already been passed. Currently, the petition has a docket number and a second sponsor (Rep. Joseph Boncore). ED Schlacter provided a handout to the Commission with more information about Home Rule.

- **Annual Fair Housing Event in April**

Project Coordinator Rosa handed a sign-up sheet for Commissioners to claim a time they can volunteer at the Fair Housing event.

- **New Commissioner on-boarding process**

ED Schlacter explained that there was a limited applicant pool for the current vacancy. The posting ends February 8, 2019. The Commission may need to extend the posting.

Commissioners Cox and Ly expressed interest in reviewing the applications. ED Schlacter stated that the interview panel would be comprised of either one or both Chairs and the ED. ED Schlacter listed the various items in the Welcome package created for new Commission members: Human Rights and Fair Housing Ordinances, CHRC Rules of Procedure, Federal Fair Housing Act, Open Meeting Law, State Ethics Law, Complaint Final Determination Training, and shadowing when a Commissioner is reviewing a determination. Co-Chair Stadlan suggested adding the most recent minutes in the package to help the new member be familiar to the topics being discussed at their first meeting. ED Schlacter told the Commission that there will be an opportunity in the Fall for members to attend the mediation training provided by the Community Dispute Settlement Center.

- **Tenants' Rights Organizations**

ED Schlacter read out a list of local organizations that provide information to individuals with concerns on tenant's rights:

- Harvard Legal Aide Center
- CLASCC
- Inspectional Services Dept.
- Just-A-Start
- Disability Law Center
- Mediation for Results
- Community Dispute Settlement Center
- Consumer's Council
- Office of the Attorney General
- CEOC

Co-Chairs Evans, Stadlan, and Commissioners Cox and Kourabas expressed interest in starting a working group charged with sharing outreach materials with those organizations.

- **Individual Commissioner Responsibilities**

Co-Chairs explained their interests in having commission members discuss their involvement in other community groups. How can the Commission expand its reach by using existing contacts? The Co-Chairs asked commission members to report back from those communities.

## **6. Outreach:**

- **Outreach to CRLS**

The creator of the CRLS Do You Know newsletter agreed to highlight the Human Rights Commission. ED Schlacter and Commissioner Kourabas have drafted an excerpt for publishing.

- **Riverfest**

Riverfest is scheduled for Saturday, June 1 from 11- 6 pm. We will need coverage for the entire time and it is a rain or shine event.

## **7. Future Planning**

- **CHRC/LGBTQ+ Collaboration: Public Accommodations Law Training for Licensed Businesses**

Planning for this training is postponed for after May because the Licensing Commission is in high demand due to relicensing application deadlines.

## **8. Parking Lot**

- **Baby U – Lead Law/Family Status Discrimination**

Commissioner Selk suggested changing the approach to looking at how we can use Find It Cambridge, which is a tool that families already rely on. Project Coordinator Rosa will research how to add the outreach materials to the Commission's landing page.

## **9. Items for next month's agenda**

- Commissioner Cox suggested discussion on extended day and how it may impact POC families.

Commissioner Selk moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:50 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Ly.

**Next Commission meeting will be on Thursday, March 7, 2019, in the Large Conference Room on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor at 6:00 p.m.**