



**Cambridge Human Rights Commission
Thursday, January 3, 2019**

Present: Chair Chanta Bhan, Vice Chair Joshua Stadlan, Commissioners Bonita Cox, Katie Stack, Mercedes Evans, Yasmin Padamsee Forbes, 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 Sabrina Selk, Olinda Marshall, and Kuong Ly.

Documents Used:

- December Minutes

1. Call to Order

Chair Chanta Bhan called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. No one was recording the meeting.

2. Review and approval of December Minutes

The Commission reviewed the minutes from the December meeting. Commissioner Evans moved to approve the minutes and seconded by Vice Chair Stadlan.

3. Executive Director's Report

ED Schlacter updated the members of the Commission on cases. Since the December meeting, there have not been any new cases opened, and the five cases discussed at the previous meeting are still pending. ED Schlacter updated the Commission on staff training and activities. CHRC staff attended the NEPT networking event that addressed Housing Challenges in Cambridge. This event described the housing resources available to service providers in Cambridge and how to make referrals to specific departments and organizations. One of the biggest takeaways is the role that the Multiservice Center plays as the first stop for referrals to services and programs. Commissioner Stadlan shared the afternoon to midnight hotline number to CASPAR (617-592-6895) for homeless health and safety issues on the street. Attorney Investigator Acloque led a training about CHRC at a housing development located at 1221 Cambridge Street that was requested by a resident. Commissioner Stadlan and Attorney Investigator Acloque attended Housing Information Sessions hosted by CDD/Housing staff. ED Schlacter is working with Wit Hendon of CLC to schedule outreach presentations in March and May.

4. December meeting follow up:

- **Parking Lot**

The Commission discussed labeling a portion of the agenda as a “parking lot” for items that have been backburned. Commissioner Cox moved to create a practice for past discussed items to be moved off the agenda and seconded by Commissioner Kourabas. The Commission voted unanimously to have new agenda items discussed at a regular meeting and roll over if necessary for an addition 2 months while in development. Afterward, the agenda item will move into a “parking lot” for up to 3 months for the Commission to follow up or scrap the idea.

- **Universal Declaration of Human Rights Reading**

Commissioner Evans provided feedback on the December 10th event at the Main Library for a reading of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Commissioner Evans stated that the event felt chaotic and disorganized because the readers did not receive their parts ahead of time.

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

The Commission will discuss this topic at the next meeting when Commissioner Ly is present.

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

The Commission will discuss at the next meeting when Commissioner Bhan would have time to address the possible collaboration with Civic Unity as a separate event from the Fair Housing Fair.

5. New Business:

- **Presentation by CPD Superintendent DeMarco on Hate Crimes**

Superintendent DeMarco explained that Massachusetts defines a hate crime as any criminal act where a bias motive is evident as a contributing factor. The MA Hate Crime Reporting Act of 1991 covers bias based on race, religion, ethnicity, handicap, gender or sexual orientation. Superintendent DeMarco further explained that a hate crime can only be reported by law enforcement agencies. According to Superintendent DeMarco, hate crimes in the United States increased 17% in 2017 which is the largest increase since 9/11. Hate crimes in Massachusetts increased similarly to the national trend. Destruction of property/vandalism and threats/intimidation are the most frequently reported hate crimes in the state. Superintendent DeMarco stated there were 16 hate crime incidents reported in Cambridge in 2018, and hate crimes appear to be trending upwards slightly in Cambridge over the past decade.

- **Votes for 2019 CHRC Chair /Vice-Chair/Co-Chairs**

Chair Bhan indicated that she was not interested in being considered to chair the Commission for another year. The Commission voted unanimously for the nomination of Commissioner Evans and current Vice-Chair Stadlan as Co-Chairs. The newly elected Chairs agreed to a Co-Chair model.

- **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 received approval from the Law Department for the Commission to reach out to State Representative Marjorie Decker to help advocate for passage of the Home Rule petition. ED Schlacter will follow up with the City Clerk to find out whether it has already been approved.

6. Outreach:

1. Outreach to CRLS Guidance Counselors

ED Schlacter and Commission Kourabas discussed having CHRC and the Fair Housing Event mentioned in the school department newsletter. This has been an effective strategy for the Immigrant Service Liaison of the Commission on Immigrant Rights and Citizenship. Commissioner Evans suggested hosting a forum for student grievances as previously facilitated by the Commission in 2006-2007. CHRC staff will review previous Commission work on this topic.

7. Future Planning

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

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

• Annual Fair Housing Event in April

Planning for the event has begun. The date of the event is still in process. Staff are considering alternative locations for the event.

8. Parking Lot

• Baby U – Lead Law/Family Status Discrimination

Since Commissioner Davila resigned, the Commission agreed to put this idea on hold until Commissioner Selk is present to decide on how to move forward. This is the first item to be put in the "parking lot."

• Potential new sites for CHRC presentations:

Cambridge Hospital, Cambridge Libraries, Vet's Services

Commissioner Cox moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:50 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Padamsee Forbes.

Next Commission meeting will be on Thursday, February 7, 2019, in the Large Conference Room on the 2nd Floor at 6:00 p.m.