



**Cambridge Human Rights Commission
Thursday, September 5, 2019**

Present: Co-Chair Mercedes Evans, Co-Chair Joshua Stadlan, Commissioners Olinda Marshall, Yasmin Padamsee Forbes, Sabrina Selk, Brandon Morgan, and Michael Kourabas. City Staff: Police Deputy Superintendent Robert Lowe, CHRC Staff: Executive Director Nancy Schlacter and Attorney Investigator Sabrina Acloque, and CHRC Project Coordinator Crystal Rosa

Absent: Commissioners Katie Stack, Bonita Cox, and Kuong Ly

Documents Used:

- June Minutes

1. Call to Order

Co-Chair Joshua Stadlan called the meeting to order at 6:25 p.m. No public were present, and no one was recording the meeting.

2. Welcome – Deputy Superintendent Robert Lowe

Superintendent Steven DeMarco retired over the summer and is now working as Chief for MIT Police Department. Deputy Superintendent Lowe has joined the Human Rights Commission as a liaison to the Cambridge Police Department on an interim basis. Dep. Supt. Lowe supervises the Family and Social Justice Unit of the CPD. There are approximately 30 people under his command.

3. Review and approval of June Minutes

The Commission reviewed the minutes from the June 6th meeting. Co-Chair Stadlan moved to approve the minutes to reflect edits addressed, seconded by Commissioner Kourabas.

4. Executive Director's Report

ED Schlacter updated the members of the Commission on cases. Since the June meeting, there have been 2 new cases opened, and four cases are pending. Two cases have closed. The pending cases involve allegations of discrimination based on the person's disability, race, national origin, and source of income in places of public accommodation and housing. Additionally, the cases that were closed concerned allegations of discrimination based on the person's disability and national origin in public accommodation. ED Schlacter updated the Commission on staff training and activities. ED Schlacter updated that the Fair Housing Ordinance Home Rule Petition (HB 3998) passed on the first vote before the State House of Representatives. HB3998 will move to the State Senate for their first vote. ED Schlacter extended the deadline to apply for the CHRC member vacancy to September 13, 2019 because there were only 4 applications received. The materials from the Gender Identity and

Public Accommodations training have been posted to the CHRC website. ED Schlacter presented on the types of discrimination cases handled by CHRC at the Commission for Persons' with Disabilities monthly meeting on 6/13/19. The Suffolk University Law School (SULS) Housing Discrimination Testing Program shared some findings from their recent work on discrimination based on source of income and race at the SULS quarterly Brown Bag for Fair Housing agencies.

5. June meeting follow up:

- **Office of Equity & Inclusion** – In preparation for the presentation by Director Betsy Allen at the October 3rd Commission meeting, ED Schlacter will send the Commission the questions they previously created, and demographics presentation created by Director Allen. The members of the Commission are encouraged to submit additional questions.
- **Mothers of the Plaza De Mayo** – This event was postponed until the Spring 2020 due to reorganization of the hallway near Lecture Hall, lower level of the Cambridge Public Library Main Branch. The Commission had agreed to co-sponsor a photographic exhibition called Mothers of the Plaza De Mayo at Cambridge Public Library in September.
- **CDSC Mediation training** - The CDSC Mediation training is scheduled for Saturday, September 21, 2019. ED Schlacter announced that the minimum requirement was reached with the help of staff from the Boston Office of Fair Housing and Equity who will join Commissioners Kourabas, Morgan and Padamsee Forbes. Staff from the Massachusetts Commission on Against Discrimination may be joining as well.
- **Cambridge Public School Department** – Members of the Commission agreed to have CPSD Dep. Supt. Carolyn Turk back to present again a year from when she presented to report on the progress on CPSD/CRLS equity and inclusion efforts.

6. New Business:

- **CHRC Co-sponsorship of “Pride & Progress: Film Festival & Symposium”**
Commissioner Padamsee Forbes emailed the event agenda to the Commission prior to the meeting. Commissioner Padamsee asked the Commission to cosponsor Pride & Progress: Film Festival & Symposium scheduled for Saturday, October 25, 2019 at the Harvard Kennedy School. Commissioner Padamsee Forbes confirmed that the co-sponsorship does not include a financial obligation. Once information is finalized, CHRC staff will post the event on the City Calendar and Find It Cambridge. Commissioner Selk moved to approve the co-sponsorship, seconded by Commissioner Marshall.
- **HUD proposed rule changes**
HUD released a proposal raising the threshold for disparate impact fair housing cases. ED Schlacter passed out an article from Housingwire.com which detailed what the impact would be. The proposal can be found here: <https://www.regulations.gov/document?D=HUD-2019-0067-0001>. The proposed changes would shift most of the burden onto the complainant to demonstrate before filing a case

could be possible. The public comment period is still open, and members of the Commission are encouraged to make their unique comments regarding the changes. Members can indicate that they are part of the Commission but cannot state that they are commenting in their official capacity.

HUD issued a notice of a proposed rule change to remove the requirement that HUD-funded shelter gender policies be consistent with one's gender identity. This notice of the proposed rule change is not open for accepting comments yet.

- **Discrimination in Museums** – The Commission decided to remove this item from the agenda since there were no complaints of discrimination from local museums after the allegations regarding the MFA surfaced.

7. Outreach:

- **Danehy Park Day** - scheduled for Saturday, September 14, 2019 from 11:00 – 4:00 pm
All volunteer shifts for Danehy Park Day are covered.
- **Outreach to CRLS Guidance Counselors** – The Commission agreed to hold off until the new School Committee members are elected before advocating for their help with access to CRLS guidance counselors. This item will be moved to “the bench.”
- **Cambridge Affordable Housing Information Sessions**
ED Schlacter passed out a flyer from the Community Development on Cambridge Affordable Housing Information Sessions. Fall dates are listed for Commissioners to help with outreach. Commissioner Kourabas volunteered for the session on September 12, 2019.
- **Community Stakeholders Meeting – September 26, 2019, 10 AM to 12 PM**
Dep. Supt. Lowe invited the Commission to attend the CPD's Community Stakeholders meeting scheduled on September 26, 2019. This meeting is open to all service providers in the Cambridge area. It is coordinated by the Cambridge Police Department and hosted by Biogen. There are usually 2 different providers highlighted at each meeting that provide a 20 minutes presentation on their work.

8. Future Planning

- Possible schedule conflict due to the holidays. The Commission will decide on moving the date of the January meeting to January 9, 2020 in November. **Reminder: the election for chairs will be held in January.**
- The Commission expressed interest in having the Commission for Persons with Disabilities to present about their work in either November, December or the Spring.
- Commissioner Selk suggested to members of the Commission to consider whether it has questions that would require data analysis. Commissioner Selk explained that she has many contacts in her network researching in related fields who could help answer these data specific questions. This suggestion arose from a discussion regarding eviction rates and access to court data.

- Co-Chair Mercedes asked CHRC staff to research when Superintendent DeMarco presented about Hate Crime in Cambridge and how long ago did Cliff Cook present demographics in Cambridge. Co-Chair Evans asked if they could give an annual update.

Commissioner Selk moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:45 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Stadlan.

Next Commission meeting will be on Thursday, October 3, 2019, in the Large Conference Room on the 2nd Floor at 6:00 p.m.

The Commission would like to thank Superintendent DeMarco for his years of service.