



**Cambridge Human Rights Commission
Thursday, May 6, 2021
Zoom Virtual Public Meeting
Yasmin Padamsee Forbes: Chair**

Present: Chair Yasmin Padamsee Forbes, Commissioners Kaileigh Callender, Mercedes Evans, Olinda Marshall, Katie Stack, Joshua Stadlan, and Stefanie Haug

City Staff: Interim Executive Director Jennifer Mathews, Attorney Investigator Carolina Almonte, Project Coordinator Crystal Rosa, Deputy Superintendent Robert Lowe, Detective Mui, and Sergeant Yam

Absent: Commissioners Michael Kourabas, Bonita Cox, and Sabrina Selk

Documents Used:

- April 1, 2021 Minutes

1. Call to Order

Chair Padamsee Forbes called the meeting to order at 6:12 pm and asked for a moment of silence for the gun violence and murders of Asian Americans and members of the Black community that have occurred in the US.

2. Public Comment

No one was recording the meeting and a member of the public was present, Jonathan Handel, who had not signed up in advance for public comment but was offered the opportunity to speak. Mr. Handel described himself as an attorney in LA who was a founding member of the Human Rights Commission 40 years ago. Mr. Handel stated that he did not have any formal comments regarding the meeting agenda, but would be happy to remain on Zoom and speak informally to the members of the Commission after the meeting adjournment if they were interested in hearing some early history of why CHRC was founded.

3. Review and approval of April 2021 Minutes

The Commission reviewed the minutes from the meeting on April 1, 2021. Commissioner Callender moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Commissioner Stadlan.

4. Executive Director's Report

Interim Executive Director (IED) Mathews updated the members of the Commission on the latest cases. Since the April meeting, one new case has opened, and one case has closed. The new case involves a claim of discrimination in public accommodation based on the person's disability. Currently, there are four pending cases, two of the pending cases involve claims of

discrimination in housing based on the person's source of income and disability, respectively. The third housing discrimination complaint is based on the person's family status. The fourth pending complaint involves a claim of discrimination in employment based on family status. The closed case was a predetermination settlement agreement for an employment discrimination case that was based on the person's age and gender identity. IED Mathews updated the Commission on staff trainings and activities. PC Rosa completed three different webinar panels in collaboration with the Community Development Department and the Office of the Housing Liaison for Fair Housing Month. IA Almonte participated as a panelist on Careers in Civil Rights for New England Law School in Boston. Both IA Almonte and PC Rosa attended several sessions of the Fair Housing and Civil Rights Conference.

5. **April 2021 meeting follow up**

Cambridge Police Department Officers to discuss outreach to the Asian American Community

Deputy Superintendent Lowe introduced Detective Mui and Sergeant Yam to the Commission. Both Detective Mui and Sergeant Yam answered clarifying questions from the Commission regarding their experiences and understanding of hesitation in the Asian community with reporting incidents of racialized violence to the police. Sergeant Yam listed the community partners and organizations where CPD conducts outreach to the Asian Americans at the local and state level. Based on national statistics reported in December 2020, crimes against the Asian community rose to 169% in one year. Sergeant Mui announced that on Wednesday, May 10 the local NBC channel will air a special at 11 pm about the rise of hate crime and their outreach efforts. The news special will also be distributed by CPD social media. Detective Mui stated that even within his network of friends and family, he is fielding calls with safety concerns and questions on how to protect themselves. Detective Mui explained that there is an additional barrier to reporting these kinds of crimes because the person victimized by violence would need to seek out someone who speaks English first and then go to the police to report the crime. There seems to be a generational difference regarding willingness to report and access to reporting.

6. **New Business**

An overview of the City's budget process and CHRC budget for FY22

IED Mathews explained that on Monday, May 3rd the City Manager submitted the proposed budget to the City Council. IED Mathews further explained that prior to the submission, the City Manager held hearings with each department and the finance team to determine that department's budget based on previous years and any submitted amendments. On Tuesday, May 18, the budget for the Human Rights Commission will go before the City Council, at which point the City Council can decide to pull the budget for further discussion. The City Council usually asks questions regarding the general work of the department, expenditures, or inquires about updates. The adoption of the budget is scheduled for June 7.

Discussion on the Commission member reappointment process

Currently, there is one vacancy for the Commission. For any expiring terms, the interested member will need to submit a letter to be considered for reappointment. IED Mathews

explained the current vacancy can be filled by mid-July given the timing of receiving applications and interviewing applicants. The next appointments nearing the end of their term are Commissioners Kourabas and Padamsee Forbes. CHRC staff will inform the members when their terms approach the termination dates.

Commissioner Callender moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:57 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Marshall.

The next Commission meeting will be on Thursday, June 3, 2021, in the Large Conference Room on the 2nd Floor of 51 Inman at 6:00 p.m., or Virtually on Zoom, depending on the status of the City's pandemic reopening policy.