



**Cambridge Human Rights Commission
Thursday, April 7, 2022
Zoom Virtual Public Meeting**

Present: Chair Joshua Stadlan, Commissioners Stephen Curran, Mercedes Evans, Stefanie Haug, Judith Laguerre, Katie Stack, Olinda Marshall, and Yasmin Padamsee Forbes

City Staff: Executive Director Jennifer Mathews, Attorney Investigator Carolina Almonte, Project Coordinator Crystal Rosa, Deputy Superintendent Fredrick Cabral

Absent: Commissioners Bonita Cox and Sabrina Selk

Documents Used:

- March 3, 2022, Minutes

1. Call to Order

Chair Stadlan called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

2. Public Comment

No one was recording the meeting and no public was present to comment.

3. Review and approval of March 2022 Minutes

The Commission reviewed the minutes from the meeting on March 3, 2022. Commissioner Evans moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Commissioner Curran. Minutes were approved unanimously.

5. Staff Reports

Executive Director Updates

- **Rules of Procedure Amendments**

Executive Director (ED) Mathews raised the possibility for the Commission to examine the Rules of Procedure and advise on amendments that would provide more clarity about the filing standards and hearing process. Changes would need to be sent to the Law Department for review and ultimately approved by the Commission. ED Mathews and Attorney Investigator (AI) Almonte can draft some revisions for the Commission to discuss at the next meeting. Then the Commission can propose revisions at the June meeting. There was a suggestion about providing a template to use for filing a complaint electronically.

- **Know Your Rights Training**

ED Mathews announced that the Commission on Immigrant Rights and Citizenship will be hosting a Know Your Rights Training with the Cambridge Public Library. The training will

be on Zoom, scheduled for Wednesday, April 13 from 6-7:30 p.m. Currently, there are 45 attendees registered.

- **Upcoming Housed in Cambridge webinar**

At the next Housed in Cambridge Zoom webinar, the Inspectional Service Department will provide important information about preventing pests. The Zoom webinar is scheduled for Thursday, April 14 from 3-4 p.m.

Attorney Investigator Case Report

AI Almonte stated that three cases closed since the March meeting. The eight cases described at the last meeting remain pending. Two new intakes may turn into complaints.

6. New Business

Family Social Justice Unit Presentation

Superintendent Cabral provided a brief history of the Family Social Justice Unit and the various units under his purview. Under former Commissioner Bard, the unit was created from the Community Service Unit which includes Support Services and Criminal Investigations. There is a diversionary initiative for juveniles called the Safety Net program. The program is a collaborative partnership with Cambridge Health Alliance, the Department of Human Service Programs, and the Riverside Trauma Center. Safety Net employs strategies that focus on intervention, prevention, and diversion of youth entering the criminal legal system. There were only 6 juvenile arrests in 2020 and 3 arrests in 2021. The Social Justice Unit includes mental health outreach and assistance to seniors and unhoused individuals. These programs focus on recovery and community member stabilization. The Focused Deterrence Unit works to reduce gun violence in the City. The Clinical Support Unit employs a social worker and a child psychologist. The staff works with police officers to do community-based diversion. There is continuous work between service providers and Cambridge Police to assist the schools, people who are unhoused, those struggling with substance abuse, or who have a mental illness.

CDD Environmental Equity Presentation Feedback

Commissioner Evans stated the presentation led to a good conversation and thought it would be good to get a progress report in 6 months. Project Coordinator (PC) Rosa suggested the Commission get a progress report from the new Community Engagement Manager who was hired to implement new methods for equitable community outreach.

Determination Review with Commissioner Evans

Commissioner Evans is developing a list of routine questions to ask the Attorney Investigator while reviewing a determination. Commissioner Evans volunteered to walk through the determination training with new members and offer guidance.

Community Outreach

Commissioner Laguerre advocated that any outreach planning should include meeting the community where they are because of equity issues. Commissioner Laguerre explained that some communities are not aware of CHRC or do not have the tools to reach out. Members of the Commission listed off events where outreach could be possible:

- Church events/neighborhood block parties

- Community Schools
- Friday Café at 1st Church

PC Rosa will set up a shared calendar where commissioners can suggest events to attend for outreach tabling, volunteering, and coordinate to pick up materials from the CHRC office.

Memorial Day Commemoration

The City’s Department of Veteran Affairs has requested the Human Rights Commission attend the Memorial Day Commemoration to provide information to event attendees. CHRC staff will send out a Doodle poll with shifts to cover the timeframe needed. The event is scheduled for Monday, May 30 at the Cambridge Common.

Potential Working Groups & MA bills on human rights and discrimination

Commissioner Padamsee Forbes suggested the Commission do strategic planning as a retreat to focus on the areas of interest for the year. The Commission indicated an interest in the following areas:

- Homelessness and eviction, especially in light of the moratorium lifted
- Refugee and immigrant rights
 - Afghanistan, Ukraine, and other regions
- Affordable housing and public housing
- Education / family policy council
- Organize by discrimination category
 - Employment
 - Public accommodations
 - Housing
 - Education

The Commission expressed interest in understanding the intersecting missions of the City’s other boards and commissions. ED Mathews explained that approximately 50 boards and commissions advise the City Manager. The roles vary greatly, some are advisory, and others adjudicate commission business. ED Mathews will be attending a Government Operations Committee meeting about Boards and Commission and can report back to the Commission.

Chair Stadlan mentioned two bills currently before the state legislature that may be of interest to the Commission.

- Body size discrimination –Bill currently in the State’s Ways and Means Committee about discrimination based on weight and height.
- Rights of residents experiencing homelessness – Bill also raises question of how CHA will inform tenants of their rights and responsibilities with the end of the moratorium.

Commissioner Evans moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:48 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Stack.

The next Commission meeting will be on Thursday, May 5, 2022, virtually on Zoom.