



**Cambridge Human Rights Commission
Thursday, March 3, 2015**

Present: Commissioners Chanta Bhan, Harry Reyes, Nadia Davila, Nicholas Leydon, Bonita Cox, Robert Slate, Police Superintendent Christopher Burke, and CHRC Staff Nancy Schlacter, Sabrina Acloque and Crystal Rosa

Absent: Commissioners Zainab Lakhani, Sabrina Selk, Kim Nghiem, Mercedes Evans

Documents Used:

- February Minutes
- Draft bill support letter
- Senate Bill No. 557 – An Act to Protect Access to Confidential Healthcare
- Article on “PATCH Alliance Supports an Act to Protect Access to Confidential Healthcare (S.557, H.871)
- Summary of definitions of gender and gender identity by various US cities and MGL c. 4, sec. 7, cl. 59

1. Call to order

Chair Bhan called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m. No one was recording the meeting.

2. Public Comment

No public comment.

3. Review and approval of February Minutes

The Commission reviewed the minutes from the February meeting and approved them unanimously on a motion from Commissioner Reyes, seconded by Commissioner Slate.

4. Executive Director’s Report

ED Schlacter updated the Commission on cases, staff activities, and outreach. No new cases opened, 7 cases pending and no closures since the February meeting. ED Schlacter and Attorney Investigator Acloque have attended meetings with the Office of the MA Attorney General regarding their role in fair housing matters. The U.S. Attorney’s Office has opened a local Civil Rights Office focusing on local civil rights issues. ED Schlacter met with Susan Rasmussen, who oversaw the City’s previous HUD-funded lead abatement grant. CHRC looking into developing a collaboration with the departments of Public Health and Inspectional Services to create an efficient way to inform the public on lead issues and related services. ED Schlacter and Attorney Investigator Acloque attended the U.S. Attorney’s half day conference on “Ending the School-To-Prison Pipeline.”

5. Deputy Superintendent Burke, Cambridge Police Department

Dep. Supt. Burke provided the Commission with more information about Safety Net, a program that was presented by CPD Commissioner Haas and Dep. Supt. Elow at the US Attorney’s “Ending the School-To-Prison Pipeline” half day conference. Safety Net focuses on providing resources to youth exhibiting at-risk behaviors, to prevent them from entering the criminal justice system. The Cambridge Police Department works in partnership with the Cambridge Health Alliance and the Cambridge School Department to identify the troubled youth. Youth Resource Officers are present at afterschool programs

and youth centers to encourage positive relationships between youth and police officers. Social workers and case managers from the Cambridge Police Department conduct home visits with at-risk youth's families. Dep. Supt. Burke asserted that arresting youths is the last option. Last year, only 16 youth were arrested. CPD has a similar program for the adult population called Focus Deterrence.

6. February meeting follow-up:

- Thirty-four students submitted posters to the Fair Housing poster contest. Six poster winners and six honorable mentions were selected from the participant pool. Administrative Coordinator Rosa designed the graphic for the T-shirts and invitations. MCAD Commissioner Jamie Williamson is confirmed as the Keynote Speaker for the Commission's Fair Housing event in April. Commissioners agreed to attend the Fair Housing event in April in lieu of having the April Commission meeting. The Fair Housing event will be on April 13, 2016 at 5:30 p.m. at City Hall.
- **City's Continuum of Care for the Homeless**
Shelly Chevalier from the City's Continuum of Care for the Homeless will present at the May CHRC meeting.
- **Review and consider proposed state legislation for possible support letters**
Commissioner Slate provided information about bill H.557/S.2081 – An Act to Protect Access to Confidential Healthcare, which has changed from S.2081 to S. 2138, and asked whether the Commission would support it by submitting a letter to the State legislature. Prior to the meeting, Commissioner Slate drafted a letter in support of a bill for Commissioner review. During the meeting, the Commissioners addressed their questions and concerns regarding the proposed legislation and acknowledged that the bill is not perfect, but attempts to protect those who need confidentiality in the mailed Explanation of Benefits (EOB) forms provided by insurers to policyholders. Commissioner Slate moved for the Commission to vote on acceptance of the draft support letter, with edits, seconded by Commissioner Reyes. A unanimous vote by the Commission accepted the letter of support for Bill S.2138. Commissioner Slate will make necessary edits and CHRC staff will prepare the letter for mailing.
- **Pay Equity bills (S.2107 and H.1733) and the Transgender Rights bills (S.735 and H.1577)**
Commissioner Reyes will continue his work on drafting letters in support of each bill, and send them to ED Schlacter, who will then disseminate them to the Commissioners for review in advance of discussion at the next Commission meeting.
- **Community Learning Center presentation**
Commissioner Reyes presented on behalf of the CHRC at the CLC on Tuesday morning, March 1, 2016. Commissioner Reyes was satisfied by how well the students demonstrated their understanding of lead abatement and fair housing rights. Commissioner Reyes will provide an updated version of the CLC outreach materials he prepared, to the Commissioners through the CHRC office, once edits are made. Additional CLC outreach dates will occur in May with Commissioners Nghiem, Selk and Leydon.

7. New Business

- **Updates to FHO and HRO re: gender definition**
ED Schlacter explained that the GLBT Commission had approved revising the CHRC's FHO and HRO to include the state's definition of gender identity, provided in MGL c. 4, Sec. 7. cl. 59, to

update the Commission ordinances' definition of gender. ED Schlacter explained that the City Council has to approve changes made to the HRO and the state legislature has to approve changes made to the FHO, and that the definitions should be consistent across both ordinances. She noted that the proposed changes are under review by the Law Department.

- **Collaboration with local efforts about Islamophobia/Xenophobia in Cambridge – to be discussed at a later date**

Chair Bhan asked the Commission to postpone discussion about co-sponsoring an event about Islamophobia until Commissioner Lakhani is present.

- **Muslim Justice League on “Countering Violent Extremism”**

Commissioner Slate proposed a possible speaker from the Muslim Justice League to be placed on the agenda for June. “Countering Violent Extremism” is an initiative set up by the Department of Homeland Security. According to Commissioner Slate, the initiative may violate rights by giving financial incentives to those who share information on individuals who may demonstrate extremist beliefs that “may” result in terrorism. Chair Bhan suggested that the Commission hear from Commissioner Lakhani on the matter. The Commission expressed interest in hearing from a speaker on the initiative and Commissioner Slate stated he would coordinate for the June meeting.

- **Clarifying areas for CHRC focus in 2016 based on January meeting brainstorming**

Brainstorming will be an ongoing during regular commission meetings.

- **The rise of sexual assaults at Harvard University and the role of CHRC**

Commissioner Slate is interested in drafting a public letter to Harvard to encourage their work on improving response to [Title IX](#) complaints. In 2014, Harvard was one of more than 50 colleges and universities under investigation by the United States Education Department, accused of violating federal laws related to sexual assault complaints. The government has threatened to withhold funds from universities that do not have adequate sexual misconduct policies.¹ The Commission expressed interest in learning more regarding what Harvard is currently doing to effect change. The Commission will continue its discussion at the May meeting before considering a vote to draft a public letter.

8. Outreach Subcommittee

- **CHRC presentation materials – review and reconsider**

ED Schlacter will email Commissioners the Discrimination brochures for review and discussion at the May meeting.

Commissioner Reyes motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 p.m. Seconded by Commissioner Leydon.

Next Commission meeting will be Thursday, May 5, 2016 at 6:00 p.m.

¹ [Steinhauer, Jennifer and Joachim, David. “55 Colleges Named in Federal Inquiry into Handling of Sexual Assault Cases.” The New York Times, NY, May 1, 2014](#)