



**Cambridge Human Rights Commission  
Thursday, November 3, 2016**

Present: Commissioners, Chanta Bhan, Mercedes Evans, Chara Itoka, Nadia Davila, Nicholas Leydon, Bonita Cox, Olinda Marshall, Sabrina Selk and CHRC Staff Nancy Schlacter, Crystal Rosa and CPD Dept. Supt. Steve DeMarco.

Absent: Commissioner Cynthia Orellana and Attorney/Investigator Acloque.

Documents Used:

- October Minutes
- November Agenda
- Cambridge Fair Housing Ordinance with new edits from HUD

**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 October Minutes**

The Commission reviewed the minutes from the October meeting and approved them unanimously on a motion from Commissioner Davila, seconded by Commissioner Selk.

**4. Executive Director's Report**

ED Schlacter updated the Commission on cases, staff activities and outreach. Since the October meeting, 2 new cases opened and 2 cases are pending, with 1 of the pending cases pertaining to public accommodation discrimination based on gender, in post cause proceedings. Three pending cases involve housing complaints alleging racial discrimination, with one also alleging national origin discrimination. CHRC staff met with Community Development Department – Housing Division staff to brainstorm about a Fair Housing event in April. The session identified several key organizations serving Cambridge community members looking for affordable housing or possibly at-risk of losing their housing, along with various programs and resources focused on housing related issues. ED Schlacter attended the Domestic Violence and Housing Training coordinated by Transition House and Liz Speakman, Executive Director of Initiative on Domestic Violence. Project Coordinator Rosa has been attending *Making Connections*, an outreach training by the Community Engagement Team (CET). The trainings goal is to provide each outreach worker with tools for how to empower and engage a cultural and linguistically diverse community. Attorney Investigator Acloque attended four days of intensive Mediation training provided by the Community Dispute Settlement Center.

**5. Presentation by Dr. Kharis McLaughlin, Cambridge Rindge and Latin School Title IX Coordinator**

Dr. McLaughlin provided a comprehensive review on the evolution of Title IX and its current use in the school system. Dr. McLaughlin explained that she focuses on fairness and equity at all levels of

access to education and any inappropriate uses of power. Her motivating point is not to criminalize children but using incidents that may arise as opportunities to teach and help students understand healthy boundaries. Dr. McLaughlin emphasized the importance early education about sexual harassment, bullying and sexual assault (K-12 grades), because once a student is out of school the consequences of their actions will be severe. Dr. McLaughlin also provided a basic overview of the information gathering process that occurs after a complaint is made.

## **6. October Meeting Follow Up**

- **Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Program**

A representative from the Civil Rights unit in the US Attorney's Office will speak to the Commission on December 1st regarding a program funded by the Department of Homeland Security, which encourages Muslim community members to inform when another member is exhibiting behavior indicating an interest in violent extremism.

- **Speakers on Gentrification**

ED Schlacter has been conferring with the Community Development Department to identify relevant speakers regarding gentrification and displacement of residents and small businesses. At a previous meeting, the Commissioners confirmed that their interests were mainly about housing and the small business community in Cambridge. ED Schlacter has reached out to Chris Cotter, Director of Housing, who will be scheduled for the May or June meeting.

- **Fair Housing and Lead Paint brochures updates**

The brochures have been finalized, translated into 7 different languages, and are now being reviewed by the Community Engagement Team for cultural competency.

- **Debt-bondage in Cambridge immigrant community – scheduling is ongoing.**

Chair Bhan completed initial research on debt-bondage in Cambridge and has contacted State agencies that can speak to issues of wage injustice. During the October meeting, the Commission voted unanimously to continue the conversation in March, on a motion made by Commissioner Orellana, seconded by Commissioner Leydon. Chair Bhan added that she has been in contact with former Ambassador Swanee Hunt, who is supporting a bill on Human Trafficking. Chair Bhan stated that she would draft letters of support for the Commission to review at the next meeting. Deputy Superintendent DeMarco offered to have detectives from the Special Investigations Unit speak to the Commission regarding matters of Human Trafficking. The detectives are scheduled for the meeting in February.

- **Housing Programs in Cambridge**

ED Schlacter has contacted Shayla Simmons from Cambridge Housing Authority who can be scheduled to speak to the Commission in February or May. Ms. Simmons mentioned CHA's work on a housing app that helps residents navigate the waiting list. Ms. Simmons would like to know more about what the Commission is interested in discussing. Commissioners expressed their interest in information regarding Cambridge Housing programs and about how Section 8 vouchers work in connection with various programs. Commissioner Cox is interested in understanding voucher portability, i.e. whether a Cambridge resident with a Section 8 voucher can return to Cambridge after they have moved outside of the City to use a voucher.

## **New Business**

- **January Meeting Date**

During the October meeting, the January meeting date was unanimously moved from January 5th to January 12th.

- **Fair Housing Event**

The idea of a “Housing Fair” emerged as a possible way for CHRC, CDD and the CHA to collaborate on a fair housing event in April. CHRC and CDD staff and Commissioners, as well as CHA staff, identified several organizations, programs, and resources focused on housing related issues, and CHRC staff will be contacting these to seek their participation in the event. The City Manager’s Office has approved the event concept, and CHRC staff are coordinating with CRLS for a venue. The official date of the event is dependent on location availability.

- **Fair Housing Ordinance**

After HUD reviewed the proposed changes to Cambridge’s Fair Housing Ordinance, which had been approved and submitted by the Commission, HUD alerted CHRC staff that certain language imported from the state anti-discrimination statute was not substantially equivalent to the Fair Housing Act. ED Schlacter reviewed HUD’s proposed changes with the Commission, and they were unanimously approved by the Commission on a motion by Commissioner Evans, seconded by Commissioner Davila. The Fair Housing Ordinance will be reviewed by the Law Department before submission to the State Legislature through a Home Rule petition.

Commissioner Davila moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m. Seconded by Commissioner Selk.

**Next Commission meeting will be Thursday, December 1, 2016 at 6:00 p.m.**