



# CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

## HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION



### Cambridge Human Rights Commission May 2, 2024 Hybrid Public Meeting

**Present:** Chair Stefanie Haug and Commissioners Caroline Palavicino Maggio, Sue Mapel, Josh Stadlan, Olinda Marshall, Beverly Sealey, Judith Laguerre, Sam Myers, Stephen Curran

City Staff: Executive Director Carolina Almonte, Director of Operations Sarah Binney, Superintendent Frederick Cabral

Guest Presenters: Nick DeLaCruz and Farita McPherson

**Absent:** Chair Mercedes Evans, Commissioner Yasmin Padamsee Forbes

#### 1. Call to Order:

- Chair Haug called the meeting to order at 6:04pm.

#### 2. Public Comment

- No members of the public joined for public comment.

#### 3. Review and approval of April 2024 Minutes

- The Commission reviewed the minutes from the last Commission meeting on February 4, 2024. Commissioner Sealey moved to approve the minutes. Commissioner Stadlan seconded.

#### 4. Presentation- Nick DeLaCruz and Farita McPherson, Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA)

- DeLaCruz presented about the process of accessing public housing, and how to join the list on the CHA website. Commissioner Marshall asked about the average length of wait times. DeLaCruz said that it depends on the site and the applicant. Commissioner Sealey asked about the new public housing at Jefferson Parks. DeLaCruz discussed the 200 new units being built. DeLaCruz discussed factors that increase position in a waitlist, such as living in shelter in Cambridge and veteran status. Commissioner Marshall asked about if it was possible to apply to multiple cities in the area versus just Cambridge. DeLaCruz explained that some smaller towns have conglomerate lists, but the Cambridge list is just for Cambridge. Commissioner Stadlan asked about the relationship between the Community Development Department (CDD) housing programs and CHA.
- McPherson presented about the process of acquiring a section 8 voucher. She discussed the length of the list, which is reduced by preference status or emergency need. The mobile vouchers allow holders to find their own housing in the private market. Some vouchers are also attached to specific units, but can become mobile vouchers over time. Commissioner Sealey asked about how applicants who don't have emails or access to computers can be supported in the application process. Commissioner Haug asked about specific programs for

LGBTQ+ individuals and individuals seeking asylum. Commissioner Stadlan asked about preventing discrimination against voucher holders. ED Almonte asked about use of credit scores and support for applicants who are denied based on credit score. McPherson suggested the MultiService Center for those experiencing issues with credit checks.

#### 5. Staff Reports

- ED report
  - The Attorney Investigator Position has been filled. The new Attorney will begin in June.
  - 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Marriage Equality Celebration– Event on May 18 from 11:30am-3:00pm to celebrate the first couples to receive marriage certificates in 2004. The event will have remarks from Mayor Simmons, refreshments, and a performance from the Boston Gay Men’s Chorus.
- DOO report
  - Cambridge Welcomes – Event with the Commission on Immigrant Rights and Citizenship on May 31, 2024 from 5:00pm-8:00pm on the front lawn of the Cambridge Main Library. Commissioners Mapel, Palavicino Maggio, and Laguerre volunteered to help at the event. DOO Binney will send virtual copy of flyer so Commissioners can distribute to their networks.

#### 6. Old Business

- Fair Housing Day Debrief- Fair Housing Day was very successful, with over 300 attendees and 40 participants in the panel. Commissioner Myers suggested a proactive approach to inform the public of their rights and what to do if they are experiencing discrimination.
- Instead of the June meeting, the Commissioners will have a mediation training from 5:00pm-8:00pm from the Community Dispute Settlement Center (CDSC).

#### 7. Adjournment.

- Chair Haug moved to adjourn at 7:18pm, Commissioner Mapel seconded.

**The Commission will not have a public meeting in June due to a training. The Commission will be on hiatus during the months of July and August.**