



# CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

## HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION



### Cambridge Human Rights Commission October 10, 2024 Virtual Public Meeting

**Present:** Chair Stefanie Haug and Commissioners Caroline Palavicino Maggio, Sue Mapel, Olinda Marshall, Judith Laguerre, Sam Myers, Stephen Curran, Yasmin Padamsee Forbes

City Staff: Executive Director Carolina Almonte, Director of Operations Sarah Binney, Attorney Investigator Vanessa Lawrence

Member of the Public: Corey Barr

**Absent:** Chair Mercedes Evans, Commissioner Beverly Sealey

1. Call to Order
  - ED Almonte called the meeting to order at 6:10pm.
2. Public Comment
  - Member of the Public Corey Barr introduced themselves as a member of the Watertown Human Rights Commission looking to see how Cambridge operates Commission meetings.
3. Review and approval of Previous Meeting Minutes
  - The Commission reviewed the minutes from the last Commission meeting in May 2024. Commissioner Curran moved to approve the minutes. Commissioner Mapel seconded.
4. Introductions and Welcome
5. Staff Report
  - ED Report
    - July 1 was beginning of FY25. The department has received its budget allocations from the city. The Commission is still waiting to see how much grant funding it will receive from HUD's partnership grant, if any. The Commission received HUD funding for last fiscal year's enforcement efforts.
    - The Department of Equity and Inclusion, including the Office of Equity and Inclusion, the Human Rights Commission, the Commission on the

Status of Women, and the Domestic and Gender Based Violence Prevention Initiative had a retreat on September 17, 2024. In the retreat, staff had the opportunity to get to know each other, share visioning for FY25 with other departments, and brainstorm ways that departments can collaborate.

- Attorney-Investigator Case Report
  - AI Lawrence shared that 9 cases have been closed since June 2024. Of these, 3 were found to have Lack of Probable Cause, 1 was found to have Probable Cause relating to source of income discrimination, 3 were withdrawn, and 2 had pre-determination settlement agreements; 1 for disability discrimination relating to an emotional support animal and 1 for Religious Discrimination in a restaurant.
  - Of the pending cases, 5 are related to housing discrimination, 1 is related to employment discrimination, and 1 is related to public accommodations disability discrimination.
  - There have been 7 new intakes in the past 2 weeks, mostly in the area of housing discrimination. There has been 1 related to employment and 1 related to public accommodation.
  - AI Lawrence and ED Almonte have conducted several discrimination trainings in the past few months including for the Cambridge Tenant's Council and the case workers at the Registry of Deeds overflow shelter. They have also tabled and provided information at the Housing Information Drop-in Hours on Monday, October 7 at the Central Square Library and at Danehy Park Day on September 21.
- Director of Operations Report
  - On Monday, October 7, Housed In Cambridge had Housing Information Drop-in Hours in the newly renovated Lewis Room at the Central Square Library. 15 members of the public were able to meet with staff from the Cambridge Human Rights Commission, the Office of the Housing Liaison, the Cambridge Multiservice Center, the Housing office at the Community Development Department, and the Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee. Amharic and Haitian Creole interpreters provided interpretation.

## 6. Old Business

- Debrief – Recent Mediation Training

Commented [BS1]: Can you review this writeup? Vanessa formatted her notes a bit differently than you used to so I want to make sure the information I wrote here is the right information to share.

Commented [CA2R1]: Yes, this is fine.

- On Thursday, September 5, Commissioners participated in part 2 of a mediation training with the Community Dispute Settlement Center. Commissioner Laguerre liked the movement and interactive elements of the training, the chance to try skills during the roleplays, and wants to learn more tools for impartiality during mediation. Commissioner Myers appreciated the training; he knows some information about mediation as a lawyer but would be intimidated to do it without the training. Commissioner Palavicino Maggio wished the training had included a script and that the mediation had been roleplayed by the trainers before the Commissioners tried to roleplay. ED Almonte shared that the trainers could join a future CHRC meeting and provide written materials if there was Commissioner interest.

#### 7. New Business

- DOO Binney shared that the City of Cambridge is hosting an upcoming event called, "An Advocate's Guide to Fair Housing Protections for Domestic and Sexual Violence Survivors." The Domestic and Gender-Based Violence Prevention Initiative has teamed up with the Human Rights Commission, Women's Commission, and the De Novo Center for Justice and Healing to bring this event aimed at empowering advocates working with DV survivors during Domestic Violence Awareness Month. The event will be on October 23 at 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. at the Main Library Lecture Hall. De Novo will be presenting on eviction defense and legal protections for survivors of domestic and sexual violence under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). AI Lawrence will be presenting on housing discrimination protections against sexual harassment. Commissioner Haug shared that this event would be useful for social workers and she will send the information to her networks.
- Commissioner Vacancy Update - There is a vacancy on the Commission to replace Commissioner Stadlan. ED Almonte, AI Lawrence, and Chair Evans reviewed the 10 applications, conducted interviews, and offered the position to an applicant. The appointment will be reviewed by City Council on Monday, October 14.
- Adobe Sign Overview for Determinations and Pre-Determination Settlement Agreements (PDSAs)- AI Lawrence presented to Commissioners on how to use Adobe Sign to sign determinations and PDSAs digitally.
- ED Almonte proposed a presentation in the November Meeting – Presentation by the ED of the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) to learn about the work of the CCPD and consider opportunities for collaboration. Commissioners expressed interest.

- Commissioner Laguerre shared information about efforts to find other human rights trainings for Commissioners. She is waiting to hear back from the Kennedy School and asked Commissioners for other ideas for training outreach.
  - ED Almonte shared that the LGBTQ+ Commission had a social event at the Main Library Lawn, and that the Human Rights Commission can consider if they are interested in a social event.
8. Adjournment.
- Chair Marshall moved to adjourn at 7:07pm, Commissioner Curran seconded.

**The next Commission meeting will be on Thursday, November 7, at 6:00 p.m.**