



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION



Cambridge Human Rights Commission April 3, 2025 Virtual Public Meeting on Zoom

Present: Chairs Stefanie Haug and Mercedes Evans, and Commissioners Caroline Palavicino Maggio, Judith Laguerre, Sam Myers, Stephen Curran, Beverly Sealey, Sue Mapel, Yasmin Padamsee Forbes.

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

Members of the Public: Brooke Roseberry

Absent: Commissioners Olinda Marshall, and Diane Smith

1. Call to Order:

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

2. Public Comment

- Brooke Roseberry joined to listen in as part of a school project about racial justice.

3. Review and approval of March 2025 Minutes

- The Commission reviewed the minutes from the last Commission meeting in March 2025. Chair Haug moved to approve the minutes. Commissioner Laguerre seconded.

4. Staff Reports

- ED Almonte
 - The Commission is moving offices to 689 Mass Ave. Commission Staff is working to figure out how to digitalize case files and materials.
 - The Commission will be replacing the June Commission meeting with a Commissioner social event. The Commission will be on hiatus for July and August.
 - City Manager Yi-An Huang gave an update to city council about the impact of federal policy changes at the municipal level.

- The Commission is not able to dual file discrimination cases where gender identity and sexual orientation are listed as protected classes with HUD, but will continue to be able to investigate them under the city ordinances.
- HUD has shared that immigration information of Section 8 users can be shared with federal enforcement. HUD has shared that there will be a rent surge for mixed status families using Section 8. The City is looking into how they can support the mixed status families. Chair Evans asked about efforts to litigate this policy. Commissioner Myers discussed the difficulty with litigating because citizenship status is not a protected class. Commissioner Myers inquired into the cost for the City to supplement the rental increases for these families.
- Commission Staff has completed the biannual HUD performance review and collected information about cases, budget, and trainings.
- The HUD website has been changed. Many links to trainings and resources have been removed.
- ED Almonte proposed a community workshop in partnership with the LGBTQ+ Commission to educate the public on the new protected classes: Relationship Status and Family Structure. The City of Somerville has these protected classes as well but does not engage in the same enforcement efforts as CHRC. Chair Evans proposed moving discussion of this event to the fall and having a press release about the protected classes. Commissioner Myers proposed having a flyer to distribute at Housing Resource Fair with updates.
- Al Lawrence Outreach and Programming
 - The Employee Fair Housing Webinar was on April 3, 2025, at 12pm. This was a voluntary training for City Employees. 25 employees attended, and the materials will be sent out to all employees.
 - The Fair Housing Month Panel will be a separate event from the Housing Resource Fair this year. It will be a webinar panel on Tuesday, April 29 from 6:00pm – 7:30pm. The panelists will include De Novo, Southcoast Fair Housing, MCAD, and CHRC. Commissioners interested in moderating the panel should email DOO Binney.
 - Al Lawrence attended an event about the state of Fair Housing on March 12. Representatives were present from the AGO, MCAD, Suffolk University, Massachusetts Fair Housing, De Novo, the

Executive Office of Housing, and Southcoast Fair Housing. The Massachusetts Fair Housing Center is suing HUD over funding cuts. A judge decision is freezing fair housing cuts temporarily.

- AI Lawrence Case Updates
 - 10 New Intakes
 - 3 New Cases filed; 4 pending
 - Housing (3)
 - Family Status
 - C's allege that the property manager "ghosted" her, i.e., she has not heard back about the housing application, after she disclosed to Rs that she is pregnant.
 - Disability
 - C is disabled and submitted a reasonable accommodation request asking management to designate a handicap accessible parking spot at the entrance/exit closest to her unit. C alleges Respondents have not responded to her RA.
 - Source of Income
 - C alleges that R's discriminated against him by refusing to negotiate for rent because he intended to pay with a section 8 housing voucher.
 - Public Accommodations
 - Disability
 - C alleges that R, a local store, is discriminating against him by blocking the path to the restrooms with cleaning supplies, making it inaccessible for someone using a wheelchair.
 - Pending:
 - Public accommodations/Gender Identity discrimination
 - Housing/Disability discrimination
 - Housing/Family Status discrimination
 - Mediation Successes/Movement
 - Source of income and family status discrimination case
 - Allegations: R wouldn't let C apply because her family size (5) was too big for the apartment, even though that's what her voucher provides for

- PDSA includes (1) CHRC source of income training, (2) MCAD Housing Discrimination 101 Training
 - PDSA EXECUTED; CASE DISMISSED
- Source of Income Discrimination case (conciliated by Stefanie)
 - Allegations: R denied C's application because she did not meet the income requirement even though her application stated that she would be using a voucher
 - PDSA includes (1) monetary compensation of \$7,000, (2) internal training on application review, (3) fair housing training, and (4) amendments to the application
 - PCCA EXECUTED; CASE DISMISSED
- Source of Income discrimination case
 - Allegations: R's charged C for rent owed and began the eviction process after Metro Housing Boston withheld/paused payment on the voucher because R's failed inspection.
 - Parties would like to settle with (1) the acknowledgement that C does not owe any money and (2) a check to C for money owed to him.
 - Agreed to by all parties. Waiting on signatures
- NOTE: We have 18 active cases, of which 4 cases are in the mediation phase.
- Al Lawrence will be supported by Law Department while ED Almonte is on leave.
- DOO Binney
 - CHRC Staff, in partnership with the Public Information Office (PIO), updated the website in accordance with the new PIO formatting standards for department pages. Commissioners should review the new website and send any feedback or questions to DOO Binney.
 - Fair Housing Month will be on Saturday, May 3, from 1:00pm – 5:00pm on Dorthy "Dottie" Doyle Way behind City Hall. The event will be in partnership with the CEOC 60th anniversary block party, which will take place on Inman and Bishop Allen and will include music, food trucks, and activities for families. 22 organizations and city departments will be participating in the resource fair. Chair Evans and Commissioners Curran, Sealey, Laguerre, Myers, and Palavicino Maggio volunteered for the event. DOO Binney will

send more information to volunteers about day-of logistics and timing.

5. New Business

- Governor Healey signed "H62: An Act Extending Certain COVID-19 Measures Adopted During the State of Emergency," which extends the ability for public meetings to be hybrid or remote until June 30, 2027.
- Commissioners decided to replace the June Commission meeting with a get-together dinner. Commissioners proposed combining with other Commissions for this event.

6. Public comment

- Brooke Roseberry, CRLS senior, asked questions to Commissioners as part of Senior project.
 - Question 1: How do you think racial injustice affects communities trust in law enforcement? Superintendent Cabral shared that it is the duty of members of law enforcement to ensure that policing is just. Cambridge Police are trained in history of racial injustice in policing. Commissioner Laguerre asked about the use of body cameras. Commissioner Cabral shared that CPD is on day 3 of using body cameras for increased transparency. Chair Evans shared that the police connects with the public in meetings and other community engagement events.
 - Question 2: What changes do state actors need to make to address racial injustice? Commissioner Myers shared the importance of housing justice in addressing racial injustice. This includes the creation of affordable housing, subsidies for all kinds of housing, and greater supports for unhoused people. Commissioner Myers also shared the importance of funding education.

7. Adjournment

- Chair Haug motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:12pm. Chair Evans seconded.

The next meeting will be on Thursday, May 1, at 6:00pm.