



**Cambridge Human Rights Commission**  
**Thursday, March 6, 2025**  
**Virtual Public Meeting**

**Present:** Chair Mercedes Evans, and Commissioners Stephen Curran, Sam Myers, Sue Mapel, Diane Smith, Beverly Sealey, Olinda Marshall, Caroline Palavicino Maggio, and Judith Laguerre.

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

**Absent:** Chair Stefanie Haug, Commissioner Yasmin Padamsee, and Superintendent Fredrick Cabral.

**1. Call to Order**

Chair Evans called the meeting to order at 6:08 p.m.

**2. Public Comment**

No members of the public were present.

**3. Review and approval of February 2025 Minutes**

The Commission reviewed the minutes from the meeting in February 2025. Commissioner Marshall moved to approve the minutes; Commissioner Curran seconded. Minutes were approved unanimously.

**4. Staff Reports**

- ED Almonte
  - City Manager Yi-An Huang's contract was renewed for 4 additional years.
  - ED Almonte has been a part of discussions about adapting to anticipated loss of federal funds to the City, which is approximately 23 million per year. CHRC uses funds from HUD to pay for the Attorney Investigator salary, which would be replaced by city funds. Chair Evans asked about how the State will support municipalities with lost federal funding.
  - ED Almonte shared that the City Council voted to make Cambridge a Trans and Nonbinary Sanctuary City.
  - Updated Sexual Orientation Definition- ED Almonte combined the definitions proposed by Commissioner Curran and Commissioner Myers for the definition of Sexual Orientation in the City's Fair Housing and

Human Rights Ordinances. ED Almonte will report back to the Commission with the Law Department's feedback.

- The Peace Commission is working on an event to appreciate the work of all City Commissioners. This event would be hosted by the Mayor's office, likely in May
- Attorney Investigator Report
  - Outreach/Programming
    - Preventing Voucher Discrimination: A workshop for housing providers and real estate professionals.
      - Tuesday, March 14<sup>th</sup>
      - Partnered with The Center for Housing Justice and Policy at Suffolk University Law School (Fair Housing Alliance of MA)
    - Case Updates
      - 3 New Intakes
      - 6 New Cases
        - Housing (4)
          - Source of Income discrimination- C alleges that a real estate agent/landlord refused to negotiate for rent and attempted to steer her towards a different property after learning of her status as a voucher holder.
          - Family Status- C's allege that the property manager illegally charged them an additional fee for excessive noise coming from their young child.
          - Disability- C is disabled and submitted several reasonable accommodation requests for repairs to her apartment to remove cigarette smoke and odor that was triggering her disability. C alleges Respondents have not responded to her RA.
          - Race/Sex- C alleges that she is being sexually harassed by an employee of the property management company and Respondents have failed to address the issue because of her race.
        - Public Accommodations (1)
          - National Origin- C alleges that she visited a local restaurant, and the Respondents

responded to a mix up with her bill by asking “where are you from?” “Nice people in the US tip”

- Employment (1)
  - Age Discrimination- C alleges her hours were cut and she was passed over for a permanent position in favor of younger employees.
- Investigations
  - Employment: discrimination based on national origin and sexual harassment
    - Allegations: C alleges R’s gave him more work, treated him poorly, underpaid him and made sexually inappropriate comments in the workplace because of his national origin/not from the US
    - Sent ROGs to Respondents requesting additional information to support Respondents’ defenses.
  - Public Accommodations: discrimination based on disability
    - Allegations: C alleges that she was denied entry to a gym because she had her service dog with her.
    - Finally identified and connected with the security company that employs the security guard that refused her entry – waiting on their position statement.
- 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, and (3) monetary compensation of \$3,000

- \*waiting on C to figure out tax implications of settlement money
- 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
  - \*Agreed to by all parties. Waiting on signatures
- 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 16 active cases, of which 9 cases are in the mediation phase.
- DOO Binney
  - Upcoming Event- On Monday, March 10, from 4:00pm-6:00pm, Housed IN Cambridge will be hosting Housing Information Drop-in Hours at the Central Square Library. Community members with housing questions will be able to meet with representatives from the Multiservice Center, Human Rights Commission, Office of the Housing Liaison, and CDD Housing Division.
  - CHRC will be presenting a Fair Housing Webinar for City Staff on Thursday, April 3 from 12:00pm-1:00pm.
  - Fair Housing Month will feature two Commission events. The first will be an informational panel on Tuesday, April 29. The second will be a Housing Fair on Saturday, May 3. The Housing Fair will be in partnership with the

Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee (CEOC) 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration and will be held outside near City Hall.

**5. New Business**

- CHRC would like to collaborate with the Commission for Persons with Disabilities on a brochure about Disability and Fair Housing. This will be tabled for FY26.
- Ideas for partnerships and guest speakers
  - Chair Evans shared that in the past a representative from CDD came to talk to the Commission and a representative from the School Committee came to speak with the Commission about Diversity efforts.
  - Commissioner Sealey asked if the Commission could invite someone to talk more about the new Multifamily Housing Zoning Law. Sealey proposed a City Councilor or a representative from a community organization focused on housing.
  - Commissioner Laguerre shared that previously, everyone in the Commission suggested an interest topic. In the past, a representative from the Public Health Department came to speak about health disparities. Commissioner Laguerre also expressed interest in hearing from Public Policy Students.
  - Commissioner Mapel suggested a more in-depth conversation with the Commission on Immigrant Rights and Citizenship and discussed a partnership with CIRC about discrimination and National Origin. Commissioner Myers expressed support for this idea.
  - Commissioner Curran suggested a partnership with the LGBTQ+ Commission. Commissioner Smith expressed support for this partnership.
  - ED Almonte proposed inviting an Immigration Attorney from De Novo to give Commissioners a Know Your Rights training or a discussion on Immigration trends in Cambridge
- June gathering – Chair Evans discussed the possibility of an in-person gathering with dinner at the time of the June Commission Meeting. ED Almonte shared that the Commission has funds to purchase dinner. The Commission is usually on hiatus during July and August.

- 6. Adjournment** – Commissioner Curran moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:13pm. Commissioner Sealey seconded.