

**Cambridge Human Rights Commission
Thursday, September 4, 2025
Virtual Public Meeting**

Present: Chairs Mercedes Evans and Stefanie Haug, and Commissioners Yasmin Padamsee Forbes, Sue Mapel, Diane Smith, Beverly Sealey, Olinda Marshall, Caroline Palavicino Maggio, and Judith Laguerre.

City Staff: Interim Executive Director Saffana Anwar, Director of Operations Sarah Binney, Attorney Investigator Vannessa Carr, and Superintendent Fredrick Cabral.

Absent: Commissioners Samuel Myers and Stephen Curren

1. Call to Order

- Chair Haug called the meeting to order at 6:06pm.

2. Public Comments

- No members of the public were present.

3. Review and approval of May 2025 Minutes

- The Commission reviewed the minutes from the meeting in May 2025. Chair Evans moved to approve the minutes; Commissioner Marshall seconded.

4. Staff Reports

- IED Anwar
 - o ED Almonte is planning to return to work part time on September 29.
 - o Commission staff are working on streamlining requests for guest speakers to make them consistent for all commissions. IED Anwar and ED Almonte will create a proposal for a process for inviting guest speakers and offer Commissioners the opportunity to give feedback. Commissioners should abstain from inviting guest speakers until the process is ready. The goal is to create a more transparent process. Everyone is still welcome to join meetings as members of the public. Commissioners suggested that staff create a document outlining the duties of Commissioners and staff would help clarify processes.
- AI Carr
 - o Case Updates
 - 24 New Intakes (May, June, July, August)
 - 4 New Cases filed; 3 pending

- Pending:
 - Housing/Disability discrimination – C alleges R’s are unreasonably delaying the decision to grant her most recent reasonable accommodation request for additional time to review and sign paper copies of important documents relating to her tenancy at the Subject Property.
 - Employment/Disability discrimination – C alleges R’s failed to follow her existing reasonable accommodations, and failed to approve several new requests, by placing her in a unit with many environmental hazards that aggravated her disabilities, in direct contrast to her explicit requests/instructions, thereby impeding her ability to perform her job as an RA.
 - Housing/Familial Status and Retaliation – C alleges LL started harassing him/his family after LL was required to de-lead because C’s wife had a baby.
- Determinations
 - Lack of Probable Cause Determinations (2)
 - Housing/Racial Discrimination
 - Allegations: C alleged that R’s treated her differently because of her race by not cleaning her room prior to move-in, not responding to later maintenance requests, and not providing the same furnishing she was promised at lease signing.
 - Outcome: C failed to show that R’s treated her differently because of her race.
 - Housing/National Origin Discrimination
 - Allegations: C alleged that R’s allowed C and his family to be harassed by other tenants in the building due to his national origin and religion.
 - Outcome: C did not present any evidence to corroborate his claim that he was being harassed by other residents in the building

and instead presented evidence to the contrary.

- Note: 2 Withdrawals (housing)
- o Mediation Successes
 - Housing: Familial Status discrimination case
 - Allegations: R's charged a noise fee for crying baby
 - Outcome: R's waived the noise fee and allowed C's to break their lease without additional penalty.
 - Housing: Disability discrimination case
 - Allegations: R's ignored C's reasonable accommodation request for a designated handicap parking space
 - Outcome: R's agreed to provide C with a designated handicap parking space.
 - Public Accommodation: Disability discrimination case
 - Allegations: R's blocked access to the restroom for wheelchair users in a grocery store.
 - Outcome: R's apologized to C and committed to keeping the path to the restroom clear
- o NOTE: 7 cases were closed in the reporting period. We have 16 active cases, of which 3 cases are in the mediation phase.
- o Commissioner Sealey asked about the involvement of Inspectional Services in the deleading case.
- DOO Binney
 - o Danehy Park Day is on **Sunday, September 20** from 11:00am – 3:00pm. Commissioners can reach out to DOO Binney if they are interested in volunteering to table.
 - o The next Housing Drop-in hours will be fully virtual. The Housed In team hopes to find ways to reach residents with housing questions that are not currently attending Housing Drop-in Hours.
 - o The October CHRC meeting will need to be rescheduled due to religious holidays. Commissioners will receive a poll about alternative meeting dates.

5. New Business

- Outreach about new protected classes – Al Carr expressed the need for outreach about the two new protected classes that were added to the city ordinance – Family Structure and Relationship Status. Al Carr proposed the creation of a flyer that includes the purpose of CHRC,

plain language definitions of the new protected classes, and CHRC contact information. It would also have a QR code with a podcast interview with Al Carr, ED Almonte, and community members which would give the history, examples, and explanations of the new protected classes. Chair Evans asked about the audience of the materials. Chair Haug suggested collaborating with CCTV, the Cambridge Day, and the new CRLS podcast. Chair Evans suggested the use of the citywide Cambridge quarterly print publication. Commissioner Padamsee Forbes suggested utilizing the free Cambridge weekly newspaper and encouraged translation into multiple languages. Al Carr suggested collaborating with the LGBTQ+ Commission and having a call for community members to submit stories.

- Guest speakers for Commission meetings – Chair Evans suggested having the Police Department do a presentation about hate crime statistics in the city. Chair Evans also suggested having the Community Development Department (CDD) present on the demographics of the city. Commissioner Sealey suggested that a representative from the Cambridge Council on Aging present about human rights and senior citizens. Commissioner Padamsee Forbes suggested increasing CHRC's tabling presence and co-sponsorship of community events.
- HRC Coalition Meetings – Al Carr shared that there are now monthly meetings with representatives from HRCs in different cities throughout the Boston area to discuss a collaborative event. The event might include a skill building workshop for navigating hard conversations and conflicts. Chair Evans expressed interest in joining the meetings. Any Commissioners interested in joining the meetings should reach out to Al Carr.

6. Adjournment

- Chair Haug moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:35pm. Commissioner Padamsee Forbes seconded.