

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

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

City Staff: Executive Director Carolina Almonte, Director of Operations Sarah Binney, Attorney Investigator Vannessa Carr, and Superintendent Fredrick Cabral.

Members of the Public: Sue Reinart

Absent: Commissioners Yasmin Padamsee Forbes and Olinda Marshall

1. Call to Order

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

2. Public Comments

- No members of the public wished to provide public comment.

3. Review and approval of October 2025 Minutes

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

4. Staff Reports

- ED Almonte
 - o HUD has not provided any updates about the status of CHRC's annual grants. Commissioner Sealey expressed interest in Commissioners being trained on changes to federal Human Rights law.
 - o The Commission now has one vacancy. ED Almonte has submitted the request for the vacancy posting. Commissioners will be asked to interview applicants when applications have been received.
- DOO Binney
 - o CHRC and the Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) cohosted "Reasonable Accommodations in Housing: Free Workshop for Disabled Residents" on Monday, November 3 at the Main Library. Participants learned about their right to reasonable accommodation and learned best practices and resources for requesting accommodation. Participants

expressed interest in additional virtual information sessions.

- Al Carr
 - o Case Updates
 - 6 New Intakes
 - 1 New Case filed
 - Public Accommodations– C alleges Respondents engaged in racial profiling by following her around the store and accusing her of stealing because of her race.
 - o Determinations
 - Lack of Probable Cause Determinations (1)
 - Employment/National Origin Discrimination, Racial Harassment, and Sexual Harassment
 - o Allegations: C alleged that R’s unlawfully discriminated against him on the basis of national origin and sex by treating him differently than his colleagues because he is from a different country, sexually harassing him the workplace, and unfairly terminating his employment
 - o Outcome: C was unable to demonstrate that he was performing his job duties satisfactorily prior to termination, and investigation revealed that R’s addressed C’s racial harassment concerns. The sexual harassment claims were found to be outside of CHRC’s jurisdiction.

5. Old Business

- Working Group for New Protected Classes Outreach— A working group with members from both CHRC and the LGBTQ+ Commission met to discuss ways to inform the public of the two new protected classes, Family Structure and Relationship Status. They discussed the mission of the Working Group, ways social media can be used for outreach, and potential outreach to artists to support the work. Al Carr expressed interest in more Commissioners being involved. ED Almonte shared that members of the Commission on the Status of Women expressed interest in joining. Chair Evans suggested outreach to additional Commissions.
- Community Needs Assessment—ED Almonte proposed that the Commission host an opportunity to reset and reengage in the new year

and inquired about Commissioner areas of interest. Chair Evans requested a presentation for the Commission by the Community Development Department about Cambridge demographics. Chair Evans also requested a presentation about Hate Crime statistics in the city. These presentations can inform a needs assessment.

Commissioner Sealey requested a presentation from the City Manager. Commissioner Laguerre asked about format for reaching community members, such as focus groups, public forums, and surveys. ED Almonte suggested that the Commission could start with internal presentations and then decide what format makes the most sense. Chair Haug expressed interest in a Community Meet and Greet with the Commission where community members can learn about the work of the Commission and provide feedback. Commissioner Mapel suggested going to locations where people already convene, such as housing developments and public squares. Commissioner Sealey suggested the Citywide Senior Center.

- Commissioner Sealey asked about the changes to the City Charter which were voted on in the recent municipal elections. ED Almonte will provide a summary of the charter changes at the next meeting.
- Connecting with other Human Rights Commissions—Chair Evans and Al Carr attended a meeting with other Human Rights Commissions from greater Boston. The group was interested in providing a training about facilitating difficult conversations. They are currently working on a proposal for this training. Chair Haug suggested utilizing Community Dispute Settlement Center in Cambridge, which has provided trainings for CHRC in the past.

6. New Business

- Bill H.4457, An Act to end housing discrimination in the Commonwealth (Appendix A)—The Commission received a request to support this bill from One Family, Inc. The text of the bill can be found in Appendix A. Commissioner Laguerre expressed concern that it could be drastic to revoke broker licenses and asked if brokers are currently trained in Fair Housing policies. ED Almonte shared that the process for getting a broker license includes Fair Housing Training, and there is the expectation of awareness of discrimination law. This law would not lead to automatic revocation, and that a probable cause finding would be required. Chair Haug asked for clarity for how individuals would be implicated as opposed to broker companies. ED Almonte shared that individuals are already named in discrimination complaints. Commissioners requested additional time to review the bill. ED Almonte will share the text over email and Commissioners will vote in

December.

- **Guidance Documents for Commissioners**—ED Almonte shared two documents with Commissioners, “Guidance on Roles and Responsibilities: Staff and Commissioners” and “Policy on Guest Speakers.” The goal of these documents is to streamline processes across Commissions. ED Almonte is hoping that Commissioners give feedback and discuss these documents and are prepared to vote on them in January. Commissioner Padamsee Forbes gave written feedback but was unable to be present to discuss at this month’s meeting and will discuss it in December. Chair Evans requested more time to digest documents and asked about the role of the Chief of Equity and Inclusion. ED Almonte will add something to the guidance document. Commissioner Mapel asked for clarification on the following, “Commissioners may not individually represent the official position of the Commission as a body unless the Commission has voted to take a specific stance or issue a statement.” ED Almonte clarified the ability of Commissioners to speak as a representative as the Commission to share about the Commission work but not speak on behalf of the Commission for something that would need to be voted on, such as in the context of media inquiries or public comment. ED Almonte stated that Commissioners can give public comment or speak to press in their individual capacities. DOO Binney suggested inviting the Public Information Office to do a communications training for Commissioners. Al Carr suggested incorporating this training into onboarding. Commissioners should send any additional feedback to ED Almonte for discussion at the December meeting.
- **Special Commission on Combatting Antisemitism**—Commissioner Myers shared that the state has undertaken a special Commission which produced a final report on November 3. Commissioner Myers expressed concern about the ongoing atrocities in Gaza and the implication by the State Commission that it is not possible to care about these atrocities and combatting antisemitism at the same time and suggested that the Commission at the municipal level could engage with this state process. Commissioner Myers suggested providing trainings on antisemitism, facilitating community dialogue, and promoting the work of community groups that have been engaging with this dialogue. Chair Haug suggested that this aligns with the work that the group connecting Human Rights Commissions across greater Boston is doing. Chair Evans expressed desire to have training to be able to have the skills to have this conversation well, and the desire to prioritize education. ED Almonte suggested partnering with the Peace

Commission.

7. **Adjournment**

- Chair Evans moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:35pm. Commissioner Laguerre seconded.

Appendix A- Bill H.4457

SECTION 1. Section 54 of chapter 13 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2022 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out the first sentence, and inserting in place thereof the following sentence:- There shall be a board of registration of real estate brokers and salesmen, in this section and in sections fifty-five to fifty-seven, inclusive, called the board, to be appointed by the governor, with the advice and consent of the council, consisting of seven members, citizens of the commonwealth, four of whom shall have been actively engaged in the real estate business as a full-time occupation for at least seven years prior to their appointment and who shall be licensed real estate brokers, one of whom shall either be an expert in fair housing and civil rights or a tenant from a duly recognized tenants' organization in the commonwealth receiving public assistance from a local, state or federal rental voucher program, and two of whom shall be representatives of the public.

SECTION 2. Section 55 of said chapter 13, as so appearing, is hereby amended by adding at the end thereof the following paragraph:-

The board shall publish, not less than quarterly, an account of newly licensed members. The board shall also publish, not less than quarterly, a summary of complaints filed against licensed members, the actions taken by the board to investigate such complaints, disciplinary hearings, disciplinary actions or revocations of licenses, the reason for such actions by the board, including any findings, in which finding has become final, of discrimination against any classes protected by chapter one hundred and fifty-one B or otherwise protected by any other general or special law or federal statute, and the name of the affected license holder.

SECTION 3. Section 87AAA of chapter 112 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby amended by striking out the third sentence, and inserting in place thereof the following:- The board shall, after notice by the Massachusetts commission against discrimination, or any other agency that administers fair housing laws and is certified by the federal Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity pursuant to the federal Fair Housing Act, 42 U.S.C. 3601 through 42 U.S.C. 3619, inclusive, that said commission or agency has made a finding, which finding has become final, that a licensed broker or salesman committed an unlawful practice in violation of chapter one hundred and fifty-one B arising out of or in the course of his occupation as a licensed broker or salesman, shall suspend forthwith the license of said broker or salesman for a period of sixty days, and, if the said commission or agency finds that said violation by such licensed broker or salesman occurred within two years of the date of a prior violation of said chapter one hundred and fifty-one B, which finding has been final, it shall so notify the board, and the board shall forthwith suspend the license of such broker or salesman for a period of one hundred and eighty days. The

board, after notice by the office of the attorney general that a court in a matter brought by said office has made a finding, which finding has become final, that a licensed broker or salesman committed an unlawful practice in violation of chapter one hundred and fifty-one B arising out of or in the course of his occupation as a licensed broker or salesman, shall suspend forthwith the license of said broker or salesman for a period of sixty days, provided, however that if the board determines that the violation by such licensed broker or salesman occurred within two years of the date of a prior finding by a court or agency of a violation of chapter one hundred and fifty-one B, which prior finding has become final, it shall forthwith suspend the license of such broker or salesman for a period of one hundred and eighty days. The board shall suspend the license of a broker or salesman for any violation of chapter one hundred and fifty-one B referred to it under this section. Commissions and agencies empowered to make referrals to the board under this section shall make all referrals that qualify under this section and shall not have discretion as to whether to make the referral.

SECTION 4. Section 87SS of said chapter 112 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby amended by striking out the second sentence and inserting in place thereof the following sentence:-

Every individual applicant for a license as a salesman who is required to take an examination therefore shall, as a prerequisite to taking such examination, submit proof satisfactory to the board that he has completed courses in real estate subjects approved by the board, such courses to total 40 classroom hours of instruction and must include at least 4 hours on fair housing law or diversity and inclusion in real estate; provided, however, that applicants having successfully completed a course in real property while enrolled in an accredited law school in the commonwealth may also take such examination.

SECTION 5. Section 87XX 1/2 of said chapter 112 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby amended by striking out the first paragraph and inserting in place thereof the following paragraph:-

Section 87XX1/2. Any person holding a license as a real estate broker or salesman shall, within their renewal period, satisfactorily complete courses or programs of instruction approved by the board; provided that attendance at such courses or programs of instruction shall be no less than six hours but no more than twelve hours as determined by the board. The curriculum contained in such courses or programs shall contain at least six hours of instruction concerning or related to compliance with laws and regulations, including at least two hours on fair housing or diversity and inclusion in real estate, and four hours selected from any of the following subjects: equal employment opportunity; accessibility for the disabled; agency law; environmental issues in real estate; zoning and building codes; real estate appraisal

and financing; property tax assessments and valuation; and real estate board regulations. The board shall certify in advance the curriculum forming the basis of such courses or programs which satisfy the provisions of this section.