



**Cambridge Human Rights Commission  
Thursday, March 3, 2022  
Zoom Virtual Public Meeting**

**Present:** Chair Joshua Stadlan, Stephen Curran, Mercedes Evans, Judith Laguerre, Katie Stack, and Olinda Marshall

City Staff: Executive Director Jennifer Mathews, Attorney Investigator Carolina Almonte, Project Coordinator Crystal Rosa, Deputy Superintendent Fredrick Cabral

Community Development Staff: Seth Federspiel, Cambridge Climate Program Manager, Susanne Rasmussen, Director of Environmental and Transportation Planning, and Meghan Shaw, Cambridge Energy Alliance Outreach Director

**Absent:** Commissioner Yasmin Padamsee Forbes, Bonita Cox, Stefanie Haug, and Sabrina Selk

**Documents Used:**

- January 6, 2022, Minutes

**1. Call to Order**

Chair Stadlan called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

**2. Public Comment**

No one was recording the meeting. One member of the public was present to comment. Michael Brandon stated he was interested in the agenda item regarding the Cycling Safety Ordinance. According to Mr. Brandon, people in North Cambridge have been affected by the new bike and bus lanes on Massachusetts Avenue. Mr. Brandon indicated that he has attended the planning meetings for the project and shared his concerns about impacts to disabled members of the community.

**3. Presentation from Community Development Department (CDD) staff on [environmental justice work](#)**

Director Susanne Rasmussen started the presentation by introducing her colleagues Program Manager (PM) Seth Federspiel and Outreach Director (OD) Meghan Shaw. PM Federspiel led the presentation and described the pillars of decarbonization as seen in slide 1 of the presentation. PM Federspiel explained that efficiency, electrification – the act of switching from fossil fuel to clean energy and supplying renewable energy – work together with the creation of economic programs to create a roadmap for moving toward environmental justice and equity. PM Federspiel shared slides from the Urban Sustainability Director’s Network, which meets to discuss best practices and learn from others in the field. PM Federspiel acknowledged that the

field of urban planning was based on design principles and beliefs that centered the priorities of corporations, wealth, and power to white male property owners. Currently, the most vulnerable populations are the most impacted by climate change. PM Federspiel explained that moving away from extractive systems toward an inclusive construct of governance is essential in the work to address climate change. CDD has implemented an equity assessment to account for the potential benefits and pitfalls of their planning work. Slide 5 details the considerations of both pitfalls and benefits.

The Cambridge Energy Alliance has developed energy savings equitably for renters to experience similar engagement as homeowners who traditionally have more options by broadening programs to include renters. The City has partnered with All in Energy, a nonprofit that focused on equitable engagement of underrepresented groups, specifically their hiring. By having women, people of color, and multilingual speakers in the field, they increase their ability to engage and strengthen service in those communities. OD Shaw mentioned one vendor called Sun Wealth which provides low-income solar programs. Sun Wealth has partnered with the Department of Human Services Program (DHSP) Fuel Assistance office to help residents who need more support receive the benefits of solar energy. The Cambridge Energy Alliance has an “Energy Bill helpline” to help residents understand discounts available or refer information to landlords.

Members of the commission asked CDD staff follow-up questions regarding their presentation. Director Rasmussen answered the questions and provided additional information about CDD’s plans for creating more inclusive planning processes. CDD has replicated the Community Engagement Team model created by DHSP to engage communities in multiple languages. CDD will no longer borrow staff from DHSP and have an outreach manager and 5 outreach workers. OD Shaw explained that the pandemic impacted the work of All in Energy, which previously conducted door-knocking campaigns to provide residents with information. The hope is that they will be able to continue their work to promote word-of-mouth information sharing. OD Shaw shared concern about follow-through when providing translated material. Working with All in Energy has helped CDD link people from information to accessing services because there are multilingual staff able to engage with the public.

#### **4. Review and approval of January 2022 Minutes**

The Commission reviewed the minutes from the meeting on January 6, 2022. Commissioner Stack moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Commissioner Laguerre. Minutes were approved unanimously with edits addressed.

#### **5. Staff Reports**

##### **Executive Director Updates**

- ED Mathews thanked the Commission for their participation in the Community Dispute Settlement Center conciliation training.
- ED Mathews announced that in partnership with the Family Policy Council/DHSP, CHRC secured \$250,000 of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to support the work of the Language Justice initiative into FY23. The funds will pay for computer-assisted translations and interpretation needs.

- ED Mathews reminded the Commission of the upcoming Housed In Cambridge Zoom webinar on Housing Rights. The panel with the Attorney General’s Office and CHRC is scheduled for Monday, March 14 at 3 pm.

### **Attorney Investigator Case Report**

AI Almonte updated the members of the Commission on the latest cases. One case closed since the January meeting. Currently, eight cases remain pending. There is a housing discrimination complaint based on disability. A second housing discrimination complaint is based on race, national origin, source of income, and disability. A third housing discrimination complaint is based on family status. The final housing discrimination complaint is based on source of income. There are two public accommodation complaints based on race and the other is based on race and national origin. There is an employment discrimination complaint based on sexual orientation and retaliation. The second employment discrimination complaint is based on race, gender identity, and disability.

## **6. New Business**

### **Deliberation review**

Municipal buildings are now open and staff is in the office. In-person determination reviews are possible. Staff will set up times for in-person file review if a Commissioner requests. It will also be helpful if experienced members can work through a file with new members for guidance. Commissioner Evans volunteered to work with Commissioner Laguerre to review a determination in the future.

### **City Manager Search Town Hall**

Commissioner Evans reported on her experience attending the City Manager Search Town Hall. Commissioner Evans stated there was good representation from the commissions and boards. Commissioner Evans contributed to the discussion and suggested better communication from the next City Manager. Commissioner Evans explained that volunteers need to be honored for their time. Commissioner Evans further stated her support for more funding to staff commissions because the staff is stretched beyond capacity. ED Mathews explained that the new City Manager would be announced in mid-May and the information collected at the townhall would be used by the consultant to develop a leadership profile.

### **Election**

ED Mathews announced that Commissioner Stadlan was the only person who submitted an interest to be Chair. Commissioner Stadlan acknowledged Commissioner Padamsee Forbes’ contributions as chair for the last two years. . The motion/nomination to have Commissioner Stadlan serve as Chair was made by Commissioner Evans, seconded by Commissioner Marshall. Commissioner Stadlan was elected unanimously.

### **Cycling Safety Ordinance Advisory Committee**

ED Mathews explained that staff from the Traffic and Parking Department reached out asking for representation from the Human Rights Commission to participate in the Cycling Safety Ordinance Advisory Committee. There was a policy order in December 2021 which tasked the Traffic and Parking Department to improve the community process with appropriate representation. They are seeking 1 or 2 volunteers to provide a perspective from their roles on

the Human Rights Commission. Commissioners Evans, Stack and Curran expressed interest but wished to know more. ED Mathews will follow up with the interested Commissioners with more information regarding the meeting time, date, and other expectations.

Commissioner Stack moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Evans.

**The next Commission meeting will be on Thursday, April 7, 2022, virtually on Zoom.**