



**Cambridge Human Rights Commission**  
**Thursday, October 1, 2020**  
**Zoom Virtual Public Meeting**  
**Michael Kourabas: Co-Chair**

**Present:** Co-Chairs Michael Kourabas and Yasmin Padamsee Forbes, Commissioners Mercedes Evans, Joshua Stadlan, Katie Stack, and Kaileigh Callender, CHRC Staff: Executive Director Nancy Schlacter, Attorney Investigator Carolina Almonte, and Project Coordinator Crystal Rosa

**Absent:** Commissioners Bonita Cox, Olinda Marshall, Brandon Morgan, and Sabrina Selk

**Documents Used:**

- September 3, 2020 Minutes

**1. Call to Order**

Co-Chair Kourabas called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

**2. Public Comment**

A member of the public was participating in the live virtual meeting but did not provide public comment. No one was recording the meeting.

**3. Review and approval of September 2020 Minutes**

The Commission reviewed the minutes from the September 3rd meeting. Commissioner Stadlan clarified a misunderstanding regarding when he would present his research into case files on recurrent issues/locations for housing complaints. Commissioner Callender moved to approve the minutes with edits, seconded by Commissioner Stack.

**4. Presentation by Cliff Cook, Planning Information Officer for the Community**

**Development Department**

Planning Information Officer (PIO) Cook presented a lengthy summary of the demographics in Cambridge. PIO Cook prepared slides for the presentation, which will be available for the public. PIO Cook stated that he works with data from the American Community Survey, US Census, and Population Estimates Program Vintage. PIO Cook provided insights into the population trend from the 1960s to the present day. PIO Cook showed that the population of Black residents in Cambridge has been decreasing and that change can be seen in the proportion of Black students in Cambridge public schools. PIO Cook specified the numerous ancestries of Black residents in Cambridge, a third of whom are American-born Black and 16% are Haitian. Additionally, 36% of the Asian population in Cambridge are Chinese and 22% are Asian Indian. The city's Hispanic population is relatively mixed with 23% Puerto Rican, 15% Mexican, and 10% from El Salvador. A third of residents speak a different

language and about 28.8% are foreign-born. Regarding wealth, Cambridge has the second highest resident income in Massachusetts and about 5% of the residents have more wealth than 60% of the population in Cambridge. The city has similar wealth inequality to New York State, Puerto Rico, and DC and more inequality than El Salvador and Guatemala. Families living in Cambridge, tend to be families living in low- or high-income households. According to PIO Cook, 10% of Cambridge students (1000 children) live in a house without broadband internet.

**5. Conversation with Maura Pensak, Housing Liaison from the Office of the City Manager**

Housing Liaison (HI) Maura Pensak announced that the Cambridge City Council adopted an ordinance that goes into effect on Oct 14, 2020. The Tenants' Rights ordinance mandates that at the beginning of a "tenancy and when a landlord or foreclosing owner serves the tenant or former homeowner with a notice to quit or notice of lease nonrenewal or expiration, the tenant or former homeowner must be provided with a notice of basic housing rights and resources, including a list of organizations available to assist tenants and/or former homeowners on a form or forms prepared by the City." HI Pensak explained that the ordinance was modeled after the ordinance passed in Somerville. HI Pensak stated that the Law Department is currently reviewing the materials to match the provisions in the ordinance. HI Pensak explained an important tip that a tenant should know is not to leave if they are served Notice to Quit. It is only the first step in the eviction process. Additionally, tenants have more rights when they have a lease vs. being a tenant at will. Landlords will be outreached to through CCTV, the Multiservice Center, the Public Work's Recycling List, City View, and the city website.

**6. Executive Director's Report**

ED Schlacter updated the members of the Commission on cases. Since the September meeting, no new cases have opened. AI Almonte is working on settling all three cases that were pending due to the prior vacancy in her position. ED Schlacter updated the Commission on staff training and activities. AI Almonte is undertaking an 8-session mediation training. ED Schlacter, AI Almonte, and Project Coordinator (PC) Rosa virtually attended the annual MCAD Fair Housing Civil Rights conference. ED Schlacter and PC Rosa attended the Community Engagement Team training on language access that discussed the difference between language justice and language access planning.

**7. Outreach**

**HUD Partnership Grant**

PC Rosa provided the Commission with updates on the HUD partnership grant and story journal version of the Fair Housing event. The IT department has uploaded the discrimination intake forms online with the 6 new languages. The story journal of the Fair Housing Event is still in process.

Commissioner Evans moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:48 p.m., seconded by Co-Chair Padamsee Forbes.

**The next Commission meeting will be on Thursday, November 5, 2020, in the Large Conference Room on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor of 51 Inman at 6:00 p.m., or Virtually on Zoom, depending on the status of the City's pandemic reopening policy.**