



**Cambridge Human Rights Commission
Thursday, May 5, 2015**

Present: Commissioners Chanta Bhan, Harry Reyes, Nadia Davila, Nicholas Leydon, Bonita Cox, Zainab Lakhani, Sabrina Selk, Robert Slate, and CHRC Staff Nancy Schlacter, Sabrina Acloque and Crystal Rosa.

Absent: Commissioners Kim Nghiem, Mercedes Evans

Documents Used:

- March Minutes
- Draft bill support letter
- House Bill No. 1577 – An Act relative to gender identity and nondiscrimination
- Article on “Counter Violent Extremism” (CVE) “Stigmatizing Boston’s Muslim Community is No Way to Build Trust”
- Post card flyer for Breaking Stereotypes Fundraising Lunch on May 22, 2016

1. Call to order

Chair Bhan called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. No one was recording the meeting.

2. Public Comment

No public comment.

3. Review and approval of March Minutes

The Commission reviewed the minutes from the March meeting and approved them unanimously on a motion from Commissioner Cox, seconded by Commissioner Reyes, with edits addressed.

4. Executive Director’s Report

ED Schlacter updated the Commission on cases, staff activities, and outreach. Since the March meeting 1 new case opened, 6 cases are pending and 2 have closed. ED Schlacter has continued her regular collaboration with the Community Engagement Team (CET). The City of Cambridge participated in providing municipal responses to the Pew Trust immigrant survey. Their findings will be reported soon. In collaboration with the GLBT Commission, ED Schlacter is supervising projects regarding LGBTQ inclusiveness in afterschool programs and senior housing. The City Manager’s Office recently announced the formation of a new Commission on Immigrants’ Rights and Citizenship (CIRC), which will be led by ED Schlacter. A city council subcommittee will be meeting on May 12 to discuss immigrant outreach and resources in Cambridge. The CIRC will be an 11 person advisory board. Commissioners Reyes, Leydon, Selk, and Nghiem facilitated 3 outreach workshops at the Community Learning Center. CHRC staff attended a 2-day MCAD Fair Housing and Civil Rights Conference in Springfield, MA. A dozen states nationwide were represented. Commissioner Slate participated in a Career Day at Belmont Elementary School and was a representative member of the Commission.

5. **Presentation by Shelly Chevalier of DHSP's Continuum of Care for the Homeless**

Ms. Chevalier provided the Commission a comprehensive presentation regarding the State of Homelessness in the city of Cambridge. She explained that the DHSP's Homeless Services Continuum of Care (COC) does not provide any direct services to the public but serves as a contract broker for HUD funding to local service providers. Ms. Chevalier described general demographic features of individuals who are homeless in Cambridge. Reasons for becoming homeless range from disability to substance abuse and mental health issues. The Planning and Development team at DHSP counts homeless individuals on a chosen winter night each year to provide a Point in Time (PIT) count, which becomes a metric later used in funding proposals. Cambridge has services that are specific to the needs of homeless people, such as two dedicated police officers who provide services similar to caseworkers and enable homeless individual's access to shelter or detox treatment. Homeless youth can find safe housing at Y2Y Harvard Square Shelter, a student run organization, which removes the danger that may arise in a mixed age cohort environment.

6. **March meeting follow-up:**

- **Community Learning Center presentation**

Commissioner Selk and Leydon described their experience with the presentation and materials provided. They explained that presenting as a team was effective and boosted their confidence in delivering a cohesive message. Commissioner Leydon provided constructive feedback regarding the reading level of the materials. The reading level of presentation materials will be reviewed for accessibility to limited English students. Additional techniques for gauging the students' English comprehension were also discussed.

- **Collaboration with local efforts about Islamophobia/Xenophobia in Cambridge – to be discussed at a later date**

Commissioner Lakhani announced an event in Natick, MA regarding "Breaking Stereotypes-Creating Impact" on May 22. The event is a luncheon fundraiser to provide a voice to marginalized communities. Commissioner Lakhani stated she would follow up with her community and report any concerns that need addressing.

- **The rise of sexual assaults at Harvard University and the role of CHRC**

Commissioner Slate is interested in drafting a public letter to Harvard University to encourage their work on improving their response to [Title IX](#) complaints. Commissioner Slate stated that while he attended the university in the 1980s, there was a growing concern regarding how sexual assault investigations were handled, and it appears to still be a problem today. Additionally, there was a recent student walk out/protest at CRLS regarding complaints of sexual harassment. The Commission expressed an interest in learning more about Title IV complaints and investigations, in general. The Commission voted to invite Title IX coordinators of neighboring universities to speak as a panel, moved by Commissioner Slate and seconded by Commissioner Reyes, and abstained by Commissioner Cox. The vote passed by a majority vote. Members of the Commission supported a plan for gaining more knowledge before considering a vote to draft a public letter.

- **The Transgender Rights bills (S.735 and H.1577)**

Commissioner Reyes drafted letters in support of each bill, and ED Schlacter agreed to disseminate the letters to the Cambridge Legislative delegation. During the meeting, the Commissioners reviewed the draft letter for accuracy and after discussion on the edits; a

unanimous vote by the Commission accepted the letter of support for S.735 and H.1577. Commissioner Slate moved to vote on acceptance of the draft support letter, with edits, seconded by Commissioner Reyes. CHRC staff will make necessary edits and prepare the letter for mailing.

7. New Business

- **Commission Meeting Scheduling**

After a discussion regarding speaker coordination, the Commission agreed on the following schedule for the remaining meetings in 2016:

- June – Shannon Erwin from the Muslim Justice League will speak; a subcommittee will be formed for updating outreach materials and will meet during the summer break.
- July/August – summer break for the Human Rights Commission
- September 15 – Nicole Horton from DHSP Inclusion Initiative to speak about IEPs use for after school programs.
- October/November (depending on availability preference) – Information session with local Title IX Coordinators.
- December – Speaker from Y2Y Harvard Square homeless shelter
- January – Debt bondage?
- Other possible topics of interest: Navigating the housing environment with Section 8 vouchers. Barbara Chandler may be a great resource for the topic.

Commissioner Reyes motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m. Seconded by Commissioner Leydon.

Next Commission meeting will be Thursday, June 2, 2016 at 6:00 p.m.