



Cambridge Human Rights Commission
Thursday, December 7, 2023
Hybrid Public Meeting

Present: Chair Judith Laguerre, and Commissioners Josh Stadlan, Stephen Curran, Mercedes Evans, Olinda Marshall, Stefanie Haug, and Yasmin Padamsee Forbes

City Staff: Acting Executive Director Carolina Almonte, Deputy Superintendent Frank Cabral

1. **Call to Order:**
 - Chair Laguerre called the meeting to order at 6:05pm.
2. **Public Comment**
 - No members of the public joined.
3. **Review and approval of October 2023 Minutes**
 - The Commission reviewed the minutes from the last Commission meeting on October 5, 2023. Commissioner Evans moved to approve the minutes. Commissioner Haug seconded.
4. **Staff report**
 - ED Report
 - Miscellaneous updates
 - As discussed at a recent meeting, the Human Rights Commission is now positioned under the Department of Equity and Inclusion, alongside the Commission on Immigrant Rights and Citizenship, the LGBTQ+ Commission, and the Women's Commission.
 - AED Almonte asked Chief of Equity and Inclusion, Deidre Travis Brown, to join the January Commission meeting and discuss this restructuring and the mission of the Office of Equity and Inclusion.
 - Attorney-Investigator Case Report
 - AED Almonte shared that there are currently 7 open cases. 1 case was closed recently via settlement agreement. 1 new housing discrimination case will be filed in early January.
5. **Old Business**
 - Webinar in partnership with the IT Department – Role of Technology in Fair Housing: Opportunities and Challenges (October 17, 2023) - The Commission and the IT Department presented on the challenges that community members face with tech-driven barriers. The presentation

explored how technology, such as algorithms and data-driven decision-making, can both facilitate fair housing practices and fuel discrimination. The webinar was attended by 28 community members and advocates.

- Commissioner Vacancies
 - AED Almonte shared that 4 new Commissioners (Sue Mapel, Samuel Myers, Caroline Palavicino-Maggio, and Beverly Sealey) will be joining HRC in January. The new Commissioners have been encouraged to attend the January 4, 2024, meeting in-person. We look forward to welcoming them!

6. New Business

- Discussion Topic: American Freedman Commission
 - Commissioners reviewed the original policy order, Ordinance, and relevant news articles about the American Freedman Commission, which was established as a new city department that will explore historic and ongoing harms to the descendants of enslaved people and determine appropriate reparations. Commissioners asked AED Almonte to contact Saskia Vann James to speak at the February Commission Meeting. Ms. Vann James has been instrumental in informing the City Council about the importance of this work.
- Ideas from Commissioners/staff about fall 2023 and 2024 initiatives and focus areas:
 - Commissioners shared an interest in an event or partnership at an interfaith center in Cambridge to provide support regarding the Israeli war in Gaza. Superintendent Cabral shared that there has been an uptick in hate crimes in Cambridge since the war began.
 - Commissioner Haug discussed gender-based violence in the City and asked if those who are victims of domestic violence have easier access to housing. Superintendent Cabral confirmed that they do have access to emergency shelters.
 - Commissioner Evans suggested a Town Hall to talk about the anticipated changes to the Ordinances and restated her interest regarding domestic violence in fair housing.
 - Other Commissioners discussed updating or creating a new “Know Your Rights Brochure” and creating a City-Wide newsletter.

7. Adjournment

- Commissioner Stadlan moved to adjourn at 7:25pm, Commissioner Haug seconded.

The next Commission meeting will be on Thursday, January 4, 2024, hybrid at 51 Inman Street and on Zoom.