



Annual Report for 2015

I. Executive Summary

2015 was an active year for the GLBT Commission. Our researcher-intern, Elysia Chandler, completed the research and writing of our report, *The Need for LGBTQ Inclusive Healthcare for Seniors in the City of Cambridge* (available on the Commission home page at: <http://tinyurl.com/qcbkq46>). The main finding of the report is that all organizations could use further training for employees in caring for their LGBTQ patients, especially for transgender seniors. Elysia and the Commission co-chairs held follow-up meetings with the participating organizations to support them in better serving LGBTQ seniors. We have started a similar project surveying staff and residents of senior housing facilities in the city. We proposed and got accepted to give a presentation at the *LGBT Elders in a Changing World* conference at Salem State University in March 2016.

We presented several events including book readings, film showings, and networking get-togethers to help educate people about relevant issues. Commissioners staffed tables at public events to inform people about the Commission and listen to what people had to say.

We have an active liaison relationship with Supt. Chris Burke of the Police Department. He participates in our meetings, keeps us informed about police training activities in Cambridge and other locations in Massachusetts and has been working with the Training Department on an RFP for an LGBT Cultural Competency training program for all city employees, planned for 2016.

Our Commission is unique among city commissions because we have no permanent staff. Most of the Commissioners are very active between meetings: organizing and staffing events, doing research, meeting with other city people, exploring relationships with other organizations, and forming and meeting in subcommittees on various projects.

II. Events

LGBT Teacher event - March 31

This was an event for teachers in the Cambridge public, charter, and private schools to meet each other and Commissioners and to share ideas related to LGBTQ issues in their schools. It was the first such event that we organized. Following the event, we created an email list so that the Commission can share information with the teachers.

Untangling the Knot reading – May 14

Untangling the Knot: Queer Voices on Marriage, Relationships, and Identity is a book of essays with alternative views on marriage equality. We held an event in the YWCA with several of the authors, including residents of Cambridge, who read selections and participated in a panel discussion.

The Year We Thought about Love – October 15

The Year We Thought About Love is a documentary about the Boston based LGBTQ youth theatre group, True Colors. We showed the film in the Cambridge Main Library Auditorium to a large audience. The film was followed by a panel discussion with the filmmakers and several True Colors members who were in the film. This was the first event at which we offered ASL interpretation.

Community Engagement Team Networking meeting – December 12

The CET planning team asked us to help organize and participate in one of their networking events focusing on how to reach out to communities in the city who may not have an understanding of, or experience with, LGBTQ people. Commission Co-Chairs Aren and John gave a presentation and participated in a well-received event that included John “Longjones” Wambere speaking about his experiences as a gay Ugandan immigrant, and a communication exercise led by Melody Brazo of the Cambridge Public Schools.

Pride Brunch - Saturday, June 11 – 25th Anniversary

This annual event sponsored by the Commission and the Mayor’s Office occurs on the morning of Boston Pride. Awards given were:

Bayard Rustin Service Award to Corey Yarbrough and Quincey Roberts, co-founders of the Hispanic Black Gay Coalition.

Community Recognition Awards to the late Marcia Diehl, one of the pioneers in organizing the LGBT Community of Cambridge, and Robin Ochs, a renowned bisexual activist.

Rose Lipkin Awards were given to CRLS students Andy Robinson for his active role at CRLS, and Molly Katz-Christy for her role as a leader in Project10-East.

This was the 25th anniversary Pride Brunch, originally started by the Cambridge Lavender Alliance in cooperation with the Mayor’s Office.

III. Welcome/Information Tables at Public Events

At each of these events, Commissioners staffed a table with informational literature, announcements about upcoming events, and some clever give-aways with our logo. Festivals and other public events provide a great opportunity to inform the public about the Commission and to talk with people about LGBTQ issues.

MayFair – Sunday, May 3
Youth Pride - Saturday, May 16
River Festival - Saturday, June 6
OctoberFest – Sunday, October 12

IV. Seniors Health Care Project

This project, which first started in late 2014, was to survey health care organizations (hospitals, medical facilities, and nursing homes) to see what their policies and practices are with regard to LGBTQ seniors. The work was done by the Commission’s intern, Elysia Chandler, with periodic management meetings with Nancy Schlacter of the Human Rights Commission, Taha Jennings, aide to the City Manager, and the two Commission co-chairs (Aren and John). We developed a survey, contacted organizations, administered the survey (on-line, and on paper), and collected results. We followed up with the organizations to share results and help them to identify areas of possible change. All reporting keeps the identity of organizations private; the intent is not to publish a score-card but to develop working relationships with these organizations to improve the quality of their care for LGBTQ seniors. The report is available for public consumption on the Commission web site.

V. Seniors Housing Project

We have started a project to survey employees of the Cambridge Housing Authority, which provides housing to a large number of seniors in multiple locations, to see what CHA’s policies and practices are with regard to LGBTQ issues, and then to follow-up with recommendations. This project started near the year end with our intern, Elysia Chandler, doing the work. When this survey and follow-up work has been completed we will develop and execute a survey of residents and of other senior housing organizations in Cambridge.

VI. Gender Neutral Bathrooms

In 2012 the City Manager, at the Commission’s request via the City Council and a working group created for the purpose, issued a policy about Gender Neutral Bathrooms. We would like to have gender neutral bathrooms with appropriate signage in City buildings and to work with commercial establishments to have them do the same. In addition to meeting the needs of transgender people, such bathrooms are very valuable to parents of opposite gender children and caregivers of opposite gender clients. Taha Jennings, aide to the City Manager, is working with us to analyze city buildings and develop a plan. A number of cities have begun to take action on this issue.

VII. Administrative Information

Commission Roster and Staff

During the course of the year, several Commissioners resigned due to moves and/or new job commitments. Those who resigned were Mike McKenna, Neil MacInnes-Barker, Paul Miller, Kara Smith, Maggie Giles, and LaTayna Purnell. At the end of the year the remaining Commissioners were Anna Weick, Aren Stone (co-chair), Bill Barnert, Bob Parlin, Jessica Daniels, John Gintell (co-chair), Mal Malme, Maya Escobar, Rachel Oppenheimer, Steven Lee, Kevin Shpritzer, Kristina Mastropasqua, and Lesley Phillips. Interviewing for new Commissioners was done in January 2016 with appointments scheduled for February.

We continued to have the services of our Intern, Elysia Chandler, who devoted her time to the health care project and then to the housing project. A joint team of Aren Stone, John Gintell, Taha Jennings (City Manager’s Office), and Nancy Schlacter (Human Rights Commission ED) managed these projects.

Meeting Time

We decided to change the meeting time by 30 minutes to make it easier for people to arrive on time. Meetings are held on the 4th Thursday (3rd in November) at the Windsor St Health Center from 6:00 to 7:30. We don't meet in December or August.

Subcommittees

We currently have a number of subcommittees: Communications, Recruiting, Strategic Planning, Youth, and Diversity. They meet and report to the Commission at regular meetings.

VIII. Upcoming for 2016

Healthcare Project

There is some remaining follow-up with some of the surveyed organizations to be done and consideration of any further work to be completed.

Housing Project

We will be completing the survey of policies and practices with Cambridge Housing Authority staff and will follow up with management. We will extend this survey to some of the other smaller organizations offering housing facilities and associated services.

LGBT Cultural Competency Training (SOGI) for City Employees

We will be working with the Training Department, the selected vendor, and others, on planning and piloting of this new training program called SOGI for Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity.

Youth After School Activities Project

This project was essentially dormant in 2015. We hope to get it started in 2016. The plan is to identify and survey the large array of Youth After School activities to learn about their policies and practices with regard to LGBT youth and then follow-up with the organizations.

Events

We will continue our practice of holding several public events this year. One will highlight the transgender community.

New Commissioners

In addition to the 13 remaining Commissioners (listed above, 4 of whom were reappointed) we have 7 new Commissioners joining us this year. They are: Brian Eiermann, Mason Weintraub, Susan Bernstein, Linda Daniels, Kimm Topping, Sylvia Guerra, and Ted Gucciardi Waechter.