

Boston Human Rights Commission Public Meeting Minutes

June 29th, 2021 at 5PM via Zoom due to COVID-19

Present: **Commissioners:** Chairwoman Margaret McKenna, Reyes Coll-Tellechea, Ben Goldberger, Leonard Lee, Anne Rousseau and Leslie Harris (Commissioner Robert MacEachern were absent)
Staff: Executive Director Evandro C. Carvalho and Executive Assistant Susan Helmy
Others: Approximately 7 individuals from the public attended this meeting

A. Introductions

1. Chairwoman Margaret McKenna called the Meeting to order at 5PM with a majority of Commissioners present.

B. Chairwoman McKenna and Executive Director's Reports

1. Director Carvalho gave opening remarks and gave an update on the 7 initiatives that the Commissioners voted on last year. These updates include:
 - a. **Digital Divide:** Our intern Thalia Viveros Uehara will continue to conduct research on this initiative until the end of the year. We also intend on conducting a study to determine if there are disparities in the level of broadband speed between different neighborhoods in the City. Our goal is to publish a final report with recommendations of how we can address the Digital Divide problem.
 - a. Chairwoman McKenna noted that the Commission needs to find and hire an individual that has expertise in measuring the digital speeds of neighborhoods. Chairwoman McKenna also suggested that the Commission follow up with any additional questions to the providers that spoke at the May 19th Digital Divide hearing.
 - b. **Marginalization of Black Men:** The Commission's goal is to host more events, perhaps a seminar in the fall of 2021 or partner with an organization such as My Brother's Keeper. Director Carvalho and Commissioner Lee also attended a press conference earlier that day on this exact topic held by Mayor Kim Janey.
 - c. **Oversight of the Boston Police Reform Task Force's Recommendations:** By way of next steps, Director Carvalho suggests that the Commission meet with Attorney Stephanie Everett, Executive Director of the Office of Police Accountability & Transparency, to discuss how we can work together on this issue.
 - a. Chairwoman McKenna informed the Commission that she has reached out to the Kennedy School for student support regarding this initiative.
 - d. **Oversight of the recommendations made by the Mayor's COVID-19 Health Inequalities Task Force:** Director Carvalho stated that after attending

the weekly meetings, he has been informed that the Health Inequities Now plan is in its final stages and will be released soon.

- e. **Securing Immigrants' Rights:** Director Carvalho informed the Commissioners of the work that has taken place in regards to AAPI Anti-Asian Hate and LGBTQ+ support. It was suggested that the Commission print the Anonymous Incident Form in both Chinese and Vietnamese languages and mail them to residents. Additionally, the Commission can create an "Anti Hate" video focusing on the many contributions of the AAPI community. Finally, we should hire a consultant who can assist us with executing these efforts.
 - a. Chairwoman McKenna suggested that the Commission reach out to its colleagues in City Hall to promote the Anonymous Incident Report.
- f. **Combating Housing Discrimination:** Director Will Onuoha of Mayor's Office for Fair Housing and Equity recently informed Director Carvalho that they are in the middle of re-conducting this the Suffolk law study that came out in July 2020. Director Onuoha anticipates that the study will conclude in the fall and he will share the results.
- g. **Protecting LGBTQ+ residents:** Director Carvalho formed a cross-departmental working group that intends to host "listening sessions" with the community to hear how to better address the violence against the Trans community and how the City can improve services to the LGBTQ+ community.

C. End of the Year Recap- Administrative Actions

1. **Mission Statement:** The Commissioners came to a consensus on the mission statement. Enforcement became a common word and the primary focus. The statement was agreed upon and will be presented at the next Commission Meeting for an official vote.
2. **Logo:** A majority of the Commissioners felt that the logo of the Commission should have stick figures or cut outs of humans in different shades and shapes on it. This will express the importance of diversity, unity and human rights. Commission staff will go back to the City of Boston's Department of Innovation and Technology (DoIT) to redraft the logo with these ideas.
3. **Reports made by Interns:** Commissioner Coll-Tellechea suggested that HRC post the Final Reports of both interns on the Commission's website. All Commissioners agreed that this is a great idea and would give the reports a great platform. However, the Commissioners would like a disclaimer to be placed so that individuals know that the reports were done by interns of the Commission.

D. Presentation by our Ph.D intern Prisca Tarimo

1. The Commission's intern Prisca Tarimo conducted research on the achievements and challenges of Human Rights Commissions nationwide. She concentrated on the achievements of 5 specific areas which include: Police reform, Immigrant right, LGBTQ+ rights, Housing discrimination and Health inequities. These 5 areas were focused on since we have identified these areas as initiatives ourselves.
2. Prisca conducted this study by reviewing ordinances, websites, annual reports and conducting interviews on the staff.
3. Some of the achievements include: adopting LGBTQ+ pride month proclamations to recognize LGBTQ+ persons and their contributions and proposing legislation and issuing guidance against housing discrimination due to COVID-19.
4. Some of the challenges include: shortage of funding and staff, limited mandates in ordinance and raising the profile of Human Rights Commissions and developing human rights champions.

E. Public Comments

1. There were no public comments made during the meeting.

F. Votes

1. Three votes were taken during this meeting.
 - a. Majority vote of approval of the May 19th 2021 Meeting Minutes. Commissioner Goldberger abstained.
 - b. Majority vote of approval to move forward with the agreed upon Mission Statement and to formally vote on it at the next Public Meeting.
 - c. Majority vote to adjourn at 6:12pm.