

BHRC Public Meeting Minutes

July 30, 2020 at 5PM via Zoom due to COVID-19

Present: **Commissioners:** Chairwoman Margaret McKenna, Reyes Coll-Tellechea, Ben Goldberger, Leslie Harris, Leonard Lee, and Anne Rousseau (Commissioner Robert MacEachern was absent)
Staff: Executive Director Evandro Carvalho and Executive Assistant Susan Helmy
Guests: Will Onuoha, Executive Director of Fair Housing and Equity along with Commissioners Javier Flores and Ego Ezedi
Eva Millona, Executive Director of Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA Coalition)
Natalicia Tracy, PhD, Executive Director of Brazilian Workers Center
Others: Approximately 10 individuals from the public attended this meeting

1. Introductions

- A. Commissioner Harris called the Meeting to order. Additionally, Commissioners all stated their names for the public.

2. Chairwoman McKenna and Executive Director's Remarks

- A. Chairwoman McKenna began her remarks with the topic of internet access. This is not only important with schools starting in September again but with telehealth. The Chairwoman announced her plan to work closely with Executive Director Evandro Carvalho in the next coming weeks to see how they can be of assistance to groups currently working on this problem.
- B. E.D Evandro Carvalho updated the Commission on his most recent conversation with Catalina Lopez-Ospina, Executive Director of the Mayor's Office for Food Access. E.D Carvalho also spoke to his current work of drafting a mission statement, intake form and benchmark plan for the Commission to vote on.

3. Will Onuoha, Executive Director of Fair Housing and Equity along with Commissioners Javier Flores and Ego Ezedi

- A. Executive Director Will Onuoha started his segment with going over the procedural steps that proceed after an initial complaint comes into the Fair Housing Commission.
- B. The Fair Housing Commission made it a purpose to introduce themselves to the public especially after a report from Suffolk Law University was conducted and showed high levels of discrimination against people of color, especially black voucher holders. E.D Onuoha also stated that the Commission is looking to form a partnership with Suffolk Law University to do some anonymous testing for them.
- C. Commissioner Ego Ezedi emphasized how important communication is between the Commissioners. He also suggested that each Commissioner get much training as possible when it comes to hearings. Commissioner Flores stressed that Commissioners had two jobs, one is outreach and the other is being an arbitrator.
- D. Commissioner Goldberg and Chairwoman asked questions about case load and number of staff in the Fair Housing Commission to which E.D Onuoha stated that this year, they had a total of 93 cases, and they have a staff of 14 individuals.
- E. Commissioner Rousseau and Coll-Tellechea asked questions regarding outreach. E.D Onuoha explained that they received so many complaints this year because they had

an aggressive outreach approach. This approach entailed everything from placing their leaflets in newspapers, bus and train stations to posting it on Facebook and Twitter.

4. Eva Millona, Executive Director of MIRA Coalition

- A. President Millona spoke to the priority of MIRA and that of investing in immigrant integration. Immigration is a federal issue and reform is something that is long overdue. The only direct service MIRA provides is to support immigrants in becoming citizens.
- B. Millona then went on to name some of the current issues for immigrants right now such as: cash assistance, childcare and inclusion since many immigrants do not benefit from the stimulus package.
- C. Chairwoman McKenna pointed out that immigrants have rights, but the big question is whether they know what their rights are and whether city agencies know these rights.

5. Natalicia Tracy, PhD, Executive Director of Brazilian Workers Center

- A. Executive Director Tracy spoke to the history of the Brazilian Workers Center. This is a 25-year-old organization that was made by immigrants, for immigrants. This Center focuses primarily on wage violations and the advocacy/education to immigrants about their rights. While the Center has the power to resolve some cases on their own, if a case cannot be resolved, it is referred to the Attorney General's Office.
- B. The Brazilian Workers Center has become very involved in the City since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Over a 16-week span, they have provided over 35,000 bags of groceries and 3,000 diapers per week to over 10,000 immigrant families.
- C. Chairwoman McKenna again pointed out that many immigrants and others might not know their rights, but outreach and education is a step in the right direction.

6. Dr. Karilyn Crockett, Chief of Equity

- A. Dr. Crockett spoke to the importance of defining what exactly "equity" meant. The government cannot do it all and individuals cannot do it by themselves. Bringing justice to the wrongs is something we need to work as a team to achieve. Dr. Crockett stated that her job is to work as a team and to walk equity outside City Hall to all. This is not a new fight but now it has an intensified focus.
- B. Commissioner Lee made a comment that a focused concentration effort is needed on the traumatization of young black males.

7. Public Comments

- A. Haroon Rashid made a comment as to the story of Crispus Attucks and his desire to have a statue of him placed in a prominent place in downtown Boston. Haroon spoke of Crispus Attucks' story being told in a dark light however, this portrayal of his life and legacy is incorrect. He insisted that the BHRC help with this project.

8. Next Meeting

- A. Chairwoman McKenna suggested that the Commission have one meeting in August (August 13th) and then resume having meetings twice a month starting in September. All Commissions agreed to this suggestion.

9. Votes

- A. Three votes were taken during this meeting.
 - 1. Majority vote of approval of the July 16th Meeting Minutes.
 - 2. Commissioner Lee made a Motion to take a moment of silence for the recent passing of civil rights icons C.T Vivian, Congressman John Lewis and Mimi Jones. Unanimous approval.
 - 3. Unanimous vote to adjourn at 6:47pm.