

Boston Human Rights Commission Public Meeting Minutes

December 15th, 2021 at 5PM via Zoom due to COVID-19

Present: **Commissioners:** Chairwoman Margaret McKenna, Reyes Coll-Tellechea, Leonard Lee, Anne Rousseau and Robert MacEachern.
Staff: Program Manager, Susan Helmy, Education and Outreach Manager, Quincey Roberts, Investigator, Amber Garcia-Gonzalez and Director of Research and Analysis Roy Wada.
Others: Approximately 5 individuals from the public attended this meeting including Chief Celina Barrios-Millner of the Equity and Inclusion Cabinet.

A. Introductions

1. Chairwoman Margaret McKenna called the Meeting to order at 5PM with all Commissioners and staff present.

B. Chairwoman and Executive Director's Report along with Updates on Initiatives

1. New Staff Hires

- a. Amber Garcia-Gonzalez is the Commission's Investigator. She previously worked at the Boston Public Health Commission as a paralegal regarding labor and employment affairs.
- b. Roy Wada is the Commission's Director of Research and Analysis. He also previously worked at the Boston Public Health Commission. It was there that he conducted research on health inequities specifically related to COVID-19.

2. Intake Form, Statistics and Intake Process

- a. Director Carvalho informed the Commission that both the intake form and the Anonymous Incident Report Form went up in May of 2021. Since then the Commission has received 16 inquiries total, including 2 anonymously. 5 were employment based, 9 were public accommodation, 1 was housing related, and 1 was education related. The protected classes associated with these were Race (9), age (3), sex (4), Gender identity or expression (3), Religion (3), national origin (1), Disability (1) and Source of income (1).
- b. Amber spoke to the current intake process. A constituent can either phone in, walk in or file a complaint online. Once this is done, Amber sends an introductory email which includes a schedule to meet. Once this is set, Amber meets with the constituent to conduct intake. After this, Amber uses her resources to find an agency or individual that can better help

serve the constituent. Lastly, Amber follows up with the individuals and provides any further guidance if necessary.

3. LGBTQ+ Beyond Pride Initiative, Marginalization of Black Males and Securing Immigrants Rights

- a. Director Carvalho briefly went over the Beyond Pride Initiative which included but is not limited to 3 focus groups; development and distribution within City Hall of LGBTQ+ Frequently Asked Questions Sheets, site visits to the Family Justice Center, Roxbury YouthWorks as well as a survey and presentations to Community members and organizations.
- b. Several Commissioners suggested that funds from the Anti-Discrimination Support part of the Budget be used to professionalize the presentation. Additionally, it was suggested that RoyWada work with the presentation to provide statistics that could be explained in a way so that they were not seen as a validated statistical survey
 - a. Commissioner Rousseau also inquired into whether the Commission needs to take a formal vote on the Recommendation made to the new Administration regarding the creation of an LGBTQ+ Affairs office.
- c. Commissioner Coll-Tellechea, Lee and Chairwoman McKenna spoke of using this Initiative as the blueprint for the Marginalization of Black Males and further supporting the Asian American and Pacific Islander Community.

4. Housing Discrimination

- a. Director Carvalho had a conversation with Director Will Onuoha of the Office of Fair Housing and Equity. In this conversation, Director Onuoha spoke to the 100 tests conducted by Suffolk University. These tests mimic those that were conducted in a study by Suffolk University 2 years ago that found that Black Voucher holders were severely discriminated against.
- b. Director Carvalho and Amber will join the next meeting between Suffolk University and the Office of Fair Housing and Equity in January to go over additional findings.
- c. The Goal of this Initiative is to find the major culprits and to partner with the Fair Housing Office to share this information with the residents of Boston along with their rights.

5. Health Inequities

- a. Since Roy's previous work entailed conducting research on health inequities, the Commission is looking for Roy to present a proposal on what he believes the Commission should specifically take on.

6. Intern Introductions and Presentations

- a. Commission Coll-Tellechea briefly introduced the Commission's interns. Both are doctoral students at Umass Boston. Thalia has been with the Commission for about a year and Lilo has been with the Commission for the past 4 months.
- b. Lilo established a scorecard on the recommendations that were made by the Boston Police Reform Task Force. This scorecard went over which recommendations were completed, which haven't been and which he could not find any accurate data on.
 - a. Some statistics that were provided in Lilo's presentation were as follows: 45% of Bostonians identify as white while 66% of Boston Police Officers identify as white. Black Bostonians are equally represented in the Boston Police Force. Hispanic and Asian American are very underrepresented in the Police Force.
 - b. In the Boston Police Force, 87% identify as male, while 13% identify as female. This shows a grave underrepresentation as 52% of Boston residents identify as female. It is also important to note that 72% of female Boston police officers are patrol officers, which is the lowest ranked officer.
 - c. In addition to the information that Lilo would like to request from BPD, some additional information wanted by Commissioners is a comparison of the List of Promotion as opposed to who actually gets it along with the neighborhoods that officers live in.
- c. Thalia established contacts with national experts on broadband access in urban cities. She also investigated some digital divide issues that have occurred in Boston. Lastly, she provided a brief on Mayor Wu's Digital Equity Plan.
 - a. Some findings that Thalia found in her research were as follows: As of 2019: 2,703 households have no broadband service at standard speed rates (25 Mbps) and 62,868 households are underserved.
 - b. Another important finding in Thalia's research was that Comcast does not have any fiber in Roxbury, Mattapan and North

Dorchester. These areas are predominantly non-white and low income.

- c. Thalia is also requesting some information directly from the providers (Comcast and Verizon).

7. Commissioner Vacancies

- a. To date, the Commission has 2 vacancies. Chairwoman McKenna suggested that the current Commissioners either email her or the Mayor herself with recommendations.

C. Public Comments

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

D. Votes

1. Five votes were taken during this meeting.
 - a. Unanimous Vote of approval of the September 22nd 2021 Meeting Minutes.
 - b. Unanimous Vote to send a letter on behalf of the Commission to Boston Police requesting information in regards to the Initiative.
 - c. Unanimous Vote to send a letter on behalf of the Commission to both Comcast and Verizon with the information needed in regards to this Initiative.
 - d. Unanimous Vote of approval to have a routine scheduled Public Meeting on the third Thursday of every month.
 - e. Unanimous vote to adjourn at 6:26PM.