

First BHRC Public Meeting
June 30, 2020 at 5PM via Zoom due to COVID-19

Meeting Minutes

Present: Mayor Martin J. Walsh
Chairwoman: Margaret McKenna
Commissioners: Reyes Coll-Tellechea, Ben Goldberger, Leslie Harris, Leonard Lee, Robert MacEachern, Anne Rousseau
Staff: Executive Director, Evandro Carvalho and Executive Assistant, Susan Helmy
IT: Michael McKenna Miller, Volunteer IT Support
Others: Approximately 30 individuals from the public attended this meeting alongside various City of Boston Employees including Cabinet Members and Heads of Department.

1. Welcome and Introductions

A. Chairwoman McKenna asked each Commissioner to give a little background of themselves and an answer to the question, “Why are you here?”

2. Mayor’s Remarks

A. Mayor Marty Walsh gave a brief description of the Commission’s history. He spoke of Frederick Mandel, the first Executive Director of BHRC and who was also openly gay.
B. The Mayor then went into why he reactivated BHRC and how important the work of the BHRC is not more than ever. He has asked the Commission to focus on the rights of immigrants, racial justice and access to information.

3. Chairwoman McKenna and Executive Director’s Remarks

A. Chairwoman McKenna spoke to the current problems that we are having in the city. One of the problems that she spoke of is that of the internet disparities or internet deserts and how it disproportionately affects people of color.
B. E.D Evandro Carvalho thanked all of those on the team including the Mayor and mentioned some of his current work projects such as the COVID-19 Health Inequities Task force.

4. Discussion of Mission and Priorities

A. Chairwoman McKenna
1. Individuals need to know where to go to get good service and where to go if they do not receive good service.
a. “We cannot be everything to everyone.”
b. “We need to be a model not a mirror.”

B. Leonard Lee

1. A focus should be on how systematically young black males are targeted, whether it is drug addiction, gang violence or incarceration rates.
 - a. “We have a job to de-traumatize these young black males and to focus on efforts on the healing process for them.”
 - b. “Our integrity is #1.”

C. Leslie Harris

1. There is a pattern of over-criminalization of children in ALL schools, whether it is public, charter or private and this needs to be investigated.
 - a. “We should first take a look at our city schools and work closely with BPS.”

D. Reyes Coll-Tellechea

1. An area of focus should also be on the immigrant communities especially with BPD and BPS sharing information with ICE. This is very hard on the immigrant community especially since many of them are alone and do not know who to trust or who they can talk to.
 - a. Open hearings are important here so that if we can have one and investigate it, it can send not only a message but a precedent to all.

E. Robert MacEachern

1. A focus on the structural issues of our society is a big one. How we can shed some light on the issue of accountability and access to information is one that should be a priority
 - a. “Transparency is key.”

F. Ben Goldberger

1. The hearing/ report function of BHRC is important and should not be taken lightly.
 - a. “Processing one complaint at a time is not enough and will not make any sort of change or bring any success to our work.”

G. Anne Rousseau

1. There is a rise of violence against the LGBTQ community especially those against black trans individuals.
 - a. “We need to be watchful of what happens in our cities and when human rights are being violated.”

H. Evandro Carvalho, Executive Director

1. We should come up with a plan so that we can build a partnership with others, that way our message can reach more individuals.
 - a. “Where is the lane that we can take so that we can be most impactful?”
 - b. “How can we modernize something like the mission or the ordinance so it can relate to our time right now.”

5. Suggestions of people to consult

- A. MCAD, BPS, BPD, LGBTQ/ Trans communities, City Council, MOIA and Young people/ young groups in general

6. Public Comments

- A. Yusufi Vali, Director of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Advancement thanked the Commission for the meeting. He also spoke to looking forward to working with and forming a partnership with BHRC.
- B. Will Onuoha, Director of Fair Housing and Equity made some brief comments about offering to help us and being excited to work with is a partnership with BHRC.
- C. Yesenia – a nurse working and living in Boston whose father is an inmate at a Boston prison. Yesenia wanted to know what the resources or assistance could be given to inmates with mental health issues that are not receiving them in prison.
- D. A couple of other people tried to make comments but had technical difficulties.

7. Next Steps

- A. Chairwoman McKenna asked that each Commissioner provide a list of individuals or organizations that we should speak to/listen to as a Commission.
- B. Commission to potentially send out press release.

8. Meeting Frequency and Dates

- A. The Commissioners agreed to have meetings twice a month.

9. Votes

- B. Unanimous vote to adjourn.