

**City of Worcester Human Rights Commission
November 2, 2020, 6pm, virtual meeting (Webex)**

Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Lilian Chukwurah, Lauren De Oliveira, Elizabeth O’Callahan, Edward G. Robinson, Jacqueline Yang, LaToya Lewis, Deidre Padgett

Members Absent: Aaron Richman

Staff: Miriam Nyante, Jayna Turchek

Call to order and introductions

A quorum was established and Vice Chairperson Yang called the meeting to order at 6:05pm. Commissioners and those present introduced themselves. The Vice Chairperson welcomed members of the commission, and those present.

Vice Chairperson Yang acknowledged the traditional ancestral territory of the First Peoples of Massachusetts on whose land we are convening, specifically of the Nipmuc Nation, who resided in what is now known as Worcester County. Although Nipmuc history predates written history, records from the 1600’s inform us that the original inhabitants of this area were in principally three locations: Packachoag, Tatesset (Tatnuck) and Wigwam Hill (N. Lake Ave). It is important to make this acknowledgement to honor the ancestors who have come before us. Unfortunately it is all too common to live in this land without ever hearing the traditional names and history of the people who resided and prospered in these lands and who continue to reside and prosper here.

Approval of October 5, 2020 meeting minutes

Commissioner Lewis motioned to approve the minutes as written. Commissioner Robinson seconded. Motion passed with all in favor.

Request to install a flag pole at City Hall for the permanent display of the Nipmuc flag (Cheryll Holley, Chief of the Nipmuc Nation Hassanamisco reservation)

Chief Cheryll Holley joined the Human Rights Commissioners to provide an overview of the rich history, legacy and continued presence of the Nipmuc Nation in the area now known as Worcester county, and to request the assistance of the commission with installing a flag pole for the permanent display of the Nipmuc flag in front of City Hall.

- Early known settlements include the areas of Lake Quinsigamond, Tatnuck, Pakachoag and possibly the other side of Indian Lake
- A burial ground previously existed on the site of the Worcester Common
- Members of the Nipmuc Nation are present and members of the Worcester Community
- Chief Holley emphasized “this is our home” and asked for this to be acknowledged
- There is no room to install a fourth flagpole next to the existing three. Counselor King, who was present for this meeting, suggested that Chief Holley give thought to where in front of City Hall she would like to request it to be installed.

Motion: Commissioner Robinson motioned to request that until there is a permanent flag pole for the Nipmuc flag that the flag be flown on the flagpole reserved for cultural civil observances flags. Commissioner De Oliveira seconded. Unanimously agreed.

Motion: Clerk O'Callahan motioned to request that the City Manager consider the request install a flagpole at City Hall for the permanent display of the Nipmuc flag, and further install a plaque/marker with input from Nipmuc tribe at the site on the Worcester City Common to commemorate the history of the location as a previous burial site for the Nipmuc Nation. Chairperson Yang seconded. Unanimously agreed.

Review of the public records law and City of Worcester new online public records request process

<http://www.worcesterma.gov/public-records-requests>

Members of the commission discussed potential privacy and safety concerns and logistical barriers for victims of crimes with regard to the new public records portal. Commissioners created the following list of questions to be submitted to the Worcester Police Department:

- How is the ease of obtaining records balanced with ensuring people are protected from disclosure from someone who doesn't have a right to access those specific records?
- How are victims of crimes protected in this process? Could there be an automatic process for releasing incident reports for victims of crime or a separate process so that they don't have to go through the public portal?
- With regard to anonymous requests, what is the minimum information that needs to be provided to make a record request?
- If the request is anonymous, are those further redacted, or is this the same type of information that a non-anonymous person or the victim of a crime would receive?
- What if any oversight is there to the request process? What is the process for evaluating and responding to requests?

Motion: Commissioner Oliveira motioned to gather questions tonight and over the course of this month to be submitted to the public records office for a response, and to consider looking for public records training for the commission and the public. Vice chair Yang Seconded. Motion passed with all in favor.

Election of Officers

Motion: Vice Chairperson Yang motioned to table agenda item election of officers until January, Commission Robinson seconded. Motion passed with all in favor

Public Comment (No public comment)

Notice: Citizen Advisory Commission to discuss HRC recommendations for review of requirements for volunteering on city boards and commissions (Citizen Advisory Council virtual meeting Tuesday November 19th, 6:30pm, check City of Worcester website for agenda and public participation)

Clerk O'Callahan provided a brief summary of the history of the Human Rights Commission's recommendations for review for volunteering on city boards and commissions to the Citizen Advisory Council

Adjournment at 6:59pm

Motion: Commissioner Lewis motioned to adjourn the meeting. Clerk O'Callahan seconded. Motion passed with all in favor

Next meeting Monday December 7, 2020, 6pm- *Follow up conversation with the Worcester Police Department*