

Chairperson
Aaron Richman



Vice-chairperson
Cara Berg Powers

**City of Worcester
Human Rights Commission**

Members:
Shawna Curran
Lilian Chukwurah
Izaida Gonzalez
Robyn Kennedy
Ike McBride
Elizabeth O'Callahan
Edward G. Robinson

**Monthly Meeting Summary – Monday February 7th, 2017, 6pm
Worcester City Hall, Esther Howland Chamber, 455 Main St., Worcester, MA**

Members Present: Aaron Richman, Cara Berg Powers, Izaida Gonzalez, Robyn Kennedy, and Lilian Chukwurah, Edward G. Robinson, Elizabeth O'Callahan

Members Absent: Ike McBride, Shawna Curran

Staff Present: Jayna Turчек, Simon Elliott

1. **Call to Order:** A quorum was established and Chairperson Aaron Richman called the meeting to order at 6:12pm. The Vice-chairperson welcomed the Commissioners and those present, Commissioners and staff, briefly introduced themselves.
2. **Approval of January 9th, 2017 meeting minutes:** Commissioner Gonzalez motioned to approve the minutes as written. Commissioner Kennedy seconded. Unanimously approved as written.
3. **New Business:**
 - a. **Discussion for ban on conversion therapy in City of Worcester (Petitioner Dale LePage)**

Director Turчек distributed preliminary research on other states, cities and municipalities that have successfully implemented conversion therapy bans. The document, titled Conversion Therapy Ban Best Practices, also included the texts from the Pittsburgh and Cincinnati bans. Chairperson Richman framed the conversation by suggesting that the Commission would use the opportunity tonight to learn more about the issue. Petitioner Dale LePage, of New England Pride TV, petitioned that the City of Worcester declare itself free from conversion therapy, alternatively referred to as “aversion therapy,” in order to raise awareness of this harmful practice and to further declare Worcester safe and inclusive for LGBTQIA members of the community. Dale LePage mentioned that the Massachusetts legislature has proposed a bill that would ban this practice. Commissioner Kennedy raised the question as to what action the Human Rights Commission could take. Director Turчек offered that the Commission might pursue one



OFFICE OF HUMAN RIGHTS & DISABILITIES, CITY HALL ROOM 101
455 MAIN ST., WORCESTER, MA 01608
TELEPHONE (508) 799-8486 | FAX (508) 799-1218



or more of the following possibilities: statement from the Commission, an awareness campaign, a recommendation to the Mayor for a proclamation or recommendation to the City Manager for an ordinance.

Chairperson Richman stated that he believes that the Commission should act to provide necessary information to the public and as an advocating body.

Chairperson Richman introduced Jeremy Darling, a Licensed Mental Health Counselor from Island Counseling Center. Jeremy Darling highlighted the American Psychologists Association taskforce report that outlines the negative psychological effects of conversion therapy. Darling also stated that there has been legislation proposed at the state level that has not yet passed. Chairperson Richman proposed that the Commissioners do more individual research and that the next meeting include as an agenda item a further discussion of this topic.

b. Information and discussion pertaining to local impact of US Presidential Executive Orders:

Commissioners discussed the protest and the City Council meeting from last Tuesday, January 31st, 2017. Vice-chairperson Berg Powers pointed out that the language of “citizen” advisory boards, instead of “community” advisory boards, is concerning, as it excludes those many members of the community that do not have US citizenship. Commissioner O’Callahan suggested that the Commission could draft statements before next meeting, attempting to foresee certain issues, so that the Commission could approve these statements at the next meeting. Vice-chairperson Berg Powers motioned that the Vice-chair work with Director Turchek to draft a statement in support of targeted immigrant and religious groups on behalf of the Commission, to be approved at the March Commission meeting. Commissioner Kennedy seconded.

c. Request to display 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendment at City Hall for Black History Month

Vice-chairperson Berg Powers motioned to accept the donation by Commissioner Robinson of framed copies of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to be displayed in the Office of Human Rights and Disabilities, City Hall, Room 101. Commissioner O’Callahan seconded. Unanimously approved.

d. Review Calendar of awareness events and observance dates

Director Turchek distributed a compilation of awareness events and observance dates to be used as reference for future planning, the Calendar of Awareness Events and Observance Dates.

e. Discuss Make Every Day a Human Rights Day Campaign

Vice-chairperson Berg Powers presented the Commission with a draft for the Make Every Day a Human Rights Day Campaign. Commissioner Robinson reminded the Commission that the movie Loving marked the 50th anniversary of the Supreme Court decision Loving v. Virginia, and suggested that there be a screening of the movie or a celebration that coincides with Loving day, which is June 12th.

f. Commission membership update

Chairperson Richman informed the Commission that he spoke with Commissioner McBride regarding his absence. Commissioner McBride plans to submit a resignation to the Commission due to the likelihood of his continued absence due to work obligations. Vice-chairperson Berg Powers raised the issue that the Commission must consider diversity as a factor in who joins the Commission going forward. Chairperson Richman proposed that the Commission work to disseminate information on the Commission around the city, including the Commission's mission statement and the fact that there is an opening. The Chairperson will contact the Main South CDC and the Southeast Asian Coalition to advertise the opening.

4. Old Business:

a. Commissioners proposals for addressing tabled agenda items

The Race Dialogues subcommittee, at the meeting scheduled for Wednesday February 8th, 2017, will propose the 2017 workplan, which includes: City of Worcester social media policy recommendations, the Worcester Police Department Bureau of Professional Standards recommendations, and the outstanding Race Dialogue items.

b. Review draft FY16 annual report

Chairperson Richman asked the Commissioners to review the draft FY16 annual report before the next Commission meeting.

5. Location of next meeting (March 6th, 2017): City Hall, Esther Howland Chamber

Chairperson Richman suggested that the staff look into moving the next meeting to the Worcester Islamic Center.

6. Public comment (3 minutes per individual):

Officer Sharon McQueen, the Worcester Police Department LGBTQIA liaison, stated that Jeremy Darling summarized well the issue of conversation therapy bans and looks forward to continue collaboration with the Commission.

7. Adjournment at 8:18pm

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The Human Rights Commission is dedicated to its service of safeguarding the civil liberties of all persons who live or work in Worcester. May the public kindly take notice to respect the order and decorum of the meeting. Please silence all cell phones and similar electronic devices. Refrain from speaking on cell phones or to others until recognized by the Chair that you have the floor.