

Chairperson
Aaron Richman

Vice-chairperson
Jacqueline Yang

Clerk
Elizabeth O'Callahan



**City of Worcester
Human Rights Commission**

Members:
Lilian Chukwurah
Latoya Lewis
Lauren De Oliveira
Deidre Padgett
Edward G. Robinson

**Monthly Meeting Summary – Monday January 6, 2020, 6pm
Worcester City Hall, Esther Howland Chambers**

Members present: Lilian Chukwurah, Latoya Lewis, Elizabeth O'Callahan, Lauren De Oliveira, Aaron Richman, Edward G. Robinson

Absent members: Deidre Padgett, Jacqueline Yang

Staff: Jayna Turchek

1. Call to order and introductions

A quorum was established and Chairperson Richman called the meeting to order at 6:07 pm.

Commissioners and members of the public introduced themselves. The Chairperson welcomed members of the commission, and those present, including Miriam Nyante, Office of Human Rights and Disabilities; Richard Gonzalez and Evis Terpollari, Health and Human Services; and Alexander Pollino, Worcester Resident

2. Approval of November 4, 2019 meeting minutes

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

3. New Business:

A. Update and discussion on homelessness outreach and housing first efforts (Evis Terpollari and Richard Gonzalez, City of Worcester Health and Human Services)

Evis Terpollari and Richard Gonzalez spoke on role in assisting the city's homeless and addiction/recovery outreach force.

In the past year, the Quality of Life Task Force has:

- Engaged with 171 people needing assistance
- Assisted over 200 from outside of Worcester - diverted with passes back to hometowns

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Work separated in 4 different categories:

- Library Outreach - Wednesdays & Thursdays, providing case management, basic needs
- Homeless Prevention-Connect residents with agencies for homeless prevention services
 - Funding to help people remain in their homes
- Crisis Intervention
 - Evis, Richie and CIT Officers using harm reduction model
- Housing Retention
 - Quality of life issues - inspectional services, CIT officers
 - Several times a week or at least on a weekly basis, visit people in encampments and visit them where they are - under bridges, in tents, sidewalks, etc.
 - Depression, anxiety-PTSD, GAD, substance use, drug/alcohol dependency
 - Will help connect them to services, get to court
 - Clerk's office waving fees for ID's & birth certificates for homeless to obtain services such as food assistance and housing
 - Holidays have been difficult - triggers relapses, people may need to access detox - Over 70 people in last 3 months accessed detox services
- TSS, CSS - long term programs for people to move in and hit reset button
 - 83 have accessed stable housing
- Housing First Coordinator Council, created by City Manager Ed Augustus in 2018
 - Purpose: Reach functional 0
 - "Functional 0" is a system that processes and houses homeless individuals faster than homeless folks coming into the system
 - System that processes homeless individuals
 - More people being housed than people coming into the system
 - Addressing 26 recommendations Barbara Pope and associates conducted in the 2017 Task force on Housing First Solutions
 - More information here: <http://www.worcesterma.gov/hhs/housing-first>
 - Four working groups
 - Housing Supply - obtaining funds, getting agencies and supportive services together. Goal is to build 103 units for chronically homeless individuals - hoping to get them started by May
 - Central Entry System through continuum of care few years back - one of the first cities that implemented this system; with housing first, provided home for
 - Meet bi-weekly central housing mass alliance
 - 55 chronic homeless at beginning of last year
 - By the end of April, 23ish had been housed, however, more entering the system
 - Chronically Homeless Individual - continually homeless for 1 year, or at least 4 episodes of homelessness in the last 3 years
 - Episodes must be at least a week long
 - Housing First - 25 units through housing authority, SMOC, Open Sky, building tiny home village, building projects for veterans
 - Video: "A Place to Live"

- For folks who are chronically homeless, large apartments can be distressing, especially when mental health diagnosis is involved
 - 3 months start to finish
- Supportive Services - Discuss gaps in the city needing to be addressed
- Data Group - understand trends to prevent more in the future
- Crisis response group- Richie is the chair
 - SMOC and overflow shelter Hotel Grace
 - Discuss people entered through HMIS system
- Upcoming Quarterly Meeting - Wednesday January 8, 2020 – report to be released

Public Comment:

Alexander Pollino, Worcester Resident, asked about the relationship with public housing, especially given that the population is likely to increase with the PawSox coming to Worcester.

- Is the new housing mentioned above for homeless or for public housing?
 - The housing mentioned above is for identified members of the homeless population.
 - However, Worcester is at 14% affordable housing
 - Hector Reyes and Sober Housing makes numbers go up well above that
 - This is well above the state requirement, which is allocated at 10%

Strategies to educate people on housing family members

- One of the 26 recommendations - crisis response to the city’s most vulnerable
- Meeting every month where all providers get together at one table
- Intervention with behavioral contract

Mental health challenges

- A main cause of homelessness; Richie estimates 70%-80% are mental health related
- Landlord-Tenant Guarantee Program - Case Manager working with tenant
 - Has greatly improved problem
- Commissioner Mattie Castiel created Mayor’s Mental Health Task Force
 - Being able to connect people to mental health services
 - HUB model can get people seen within 1-2 weeks
- Crisis stabilization unit - people often referred back to them in HUB model
- Bring in clinician with CIT officers

Hotel Grace

- Case Managers from SMOC, enter people into HMIS database
- 136 people in Queen Street, 50 in Hotel Grace in one night

Navigators: City of Worcester Health and Human Services going to the jail to provide re-entry services 90 days before inmates come out. City of Worcester’s Department of Health and Human Services can connect residents struggling with homelessness or facing potential homelessness.

For additional information and support, Worcester residents can contact: 508-799-8486

Additional Resources: Worcester Community Action Council in Denholm Building can help provide fuel assistance. For housing resources, RCAP solutions, CMHA, SMOC.

Veteran's: Veteran's Inc can provide wraparound services, SSVF

B. Notice: Registration for St. Patrick's Day parade (Sunday March 15)

Chairperson Richman discussed past involvement with the St. Patrick's Day parade and invited Commissioners to join in the upcoming St. Patrick's Day parade on Sunday March 15, 2020

4. Old Business:

A. Debrief December 16 meeting with neighborhood meeting organizers

Clerk O'Callahan recapped the meeting held with neighborhood meeting organizers in partnership with the Worcester Police Department, as part of the ongoing initiative to facilitate conversation around understanding and supporting the neighborhood meetings under the Commission's goal to help improve community-police relations in the city.

- Deliverables provided
 - Agenda and Meeting Minute Templates
 - Resources for starting, organizing, facilitating and managing meetings
 - Shared drive for organizers to store and share resources
- Additional conversation on types of supports organizers want
- Identified need for continuing conversation with organizers and WPD

5. Public Comment (Time will be allotted for each agenda item as it is introduced or at the end of the meeting at the discretion of the Chairperson)

(See above public comment Alexander Pollino, Worcester Resident, under item 3A)

6. Upcoming Human Rights Commission meeting at 6pm in City Hall Esther Howland Chamber:

Monday February 3rd, 2020:

Review of Worcester Housing Now Initiative and draft Analysis of Impediments to Housing Report

7. Adjournment at 8:04 pm