

Chairperson
Edward G. Robinson

Vice chairperson
Aaron Richman



**City of Worcester
Human Rights Commission**

Members:
Cara Berg Powers
Harry Danso
Kathleen Gervais
Robyn Kennedy
Shirley Konneh
Eduardo Rivera
Lillie Williams

Meeting Summary for April 6th, 2015
Worcester City Hall, Esther Howland Chamber

Members Present: Cara Berg Powers, Kathleen Gervais, Shirley Konneh, Aaron Richman, Eduardo Rivera, Lillie Williams and Edward G. Robinson
Members Absent: Harry Danso and Robyn Kennedy
Staff: Jayna Turchek

- 1. Call to order:** A quorum was established and meeting called to order at 6:15pm beginning with introductions.
- 2. Approval of March 2nd, 2015 Meeting Minutes:** Unanimously approved as written.
- 3. New Business:**
 - a. Fair Housing presentation by Community Legal Aid Attorney Maureen St. Cyr**
Provided description and overview of work of Worcester Fair Housing Project, a partnership between Community Legal Aid (CLA) and the City of Worcester Office of Human Rights and Disabilities (OHRD). The OHRD has two housing discrimination intake workers, Catherine Nash and Anthony Ortiz, who conduct intakes at City Hall and out in the community with individuals who believe they have been discriminated against in seeking, obtaining or maintaining rental housing in Worcester. Intakes are referred to CLA.

Attorney St. Cyr provided an overview of the federal Fair Housing Act and went through the protected classes under state and federal housing law. She provided examples of persons with disabilities as protected classes and situations where they have or may encounter discrimination based on their having a service animal or being denied requests to reasonable accommodations or modifications that they are entitled to under the law.

b. Selection of 2015 Fair Housing Poster contest winners

The Commissioners reviewed the poster contest submissions received for the elementary, middle and high school categories. The winners are:

Xavier Perez, Kindergarten, Roosevelt Elementary School;
Jaymien Harrigan, 3rd grade, Seven Hills Charter School;



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Elijah Antoine, 4th grade, Gates Lane Elementary;
Angeles Mendez-DeLeon, 5th grade, Woodland Academy;
Raymond Lopez, 10th grade, Worcester Technical High School;
Sharleen Feeron, 10th grade, Worcester Technical High School; and
Erik Martinez, 11th grade, Doherty High School

- c. **Announcement: City of Worcester, Edward Robinson, Lt. Richard Bates recognized winners of Safe Homes People of Courage Awards** to be awarded May 1st at the annual Bridge of Central MA, Safe Homes Gala.
- d. **Last Commission meeting for Commissioners Robinson and Rivera:** Thank you for your service
- e. **Election of officers**
Aaron Richman unanimously elected Chairperson.
Cara Berg Powers unanimously elected Vice-Chairperson with the condition that she would hold the position until someone else sought the position.
Lillie Williams unanimously elected Clerk.

4. **Old Business**

- a. **Review and update on proposal for homeless shelter survey**
Discussion about focus of questions, whether to be narrowly about serving transgender individuals or broader, LGBTQ, other protected classes. Also discussed scope of survey and whether to limit to individual homeless providers, families, domestic violence shelters and other transitional housing.
Commissioner Richman will make edits to survey and Commissioner Berg Powers suggested Commissioners should send Director Turchek list of names of shelters for first wave of outreach. Commissioner Williams has master list and will make available.
- b. **Continued conversation regarding recommendations for Worcester Police Department Bureau of Professional Standards (BOPS) quarterly report**
Discussion about how to improve quarterly report received by Commission from BOPS. Can we include zip codes of stops? Can race data be included in BOPS citizen request form?
Research should be done on other cities' reporting documents. Commissioner Berg Powers volunteered to create a proposal for a timeline for the project with next steps. Commissioner Richman will survey what is done in other jurisdictions. Commission discussed what is role of Commission and what else we could be doing. Commissioners are interested in doing police ride-alongs to better understand the officer's work.
- c. **Reminder: Fair Housing Conference: Saturday April 18th, 8:30am-12:30pm, Worcester State University, Ghosh Auditorium.**

- 5. **Commissioners' Reports:** Chairperson Robinson attended the April 27th LGBTQ meeting, PFLAG meeting. He will table at the Fair Housing Conference. Commissioner Richman marched in the St. Patrick's Day parade along with Commissioner Berg Powers and Director Turchek and SEAC youth.

Commissioner Konnech attended the screening of Selma hosted by the NAACP and Congressman McGovern's office.

6. Location of next monthly meeting (May 4th, 2015): City Hall

7. Public Comment

A member of the public commented that Friendly House has a number of shelters to be included in survey. He also noted the US Dept. of Justice, NAACP and ACLU are all good places to get complaints on police misconduct.

Another member of the public is a member of the Fitchberg Human Rights Commission that has been recently restarted after a couple years of lack of quorum. They are on the road for the next four months holding meetings in four different neighborhoods.

8. Adjournment at 8:12pm