

## **Minutes of the Northampton Human Rights Commission**

8 January 2020

### **Commissioners present:**

Karen Bellavance-Grace; Booker Bush; Laurie Loisel; Davina Miller; Megan Paik

### **Commissioners absent:**

Nural Mohammed

Called to order at 5:35 pm

There was no public comment.

This is a special meeting time, rescheduled from December 2019.

Commissioner Loisel moved, and Commissioner Bush seconded approval of minutes of November meeting. Minutes adopted unanimously, with correction of a scrivener's error.

### **Discussion of the report of the Mayor's task force on panhandling.**

Commissioners again expressed gratitude for the Mayor's and the Task Force's comprehensive and compassionate work.

Mayor Narkewicz invited the Commission to review the whole report and to offer our thoughts for prioritizing the recommendations named in the report.

Commissioners discussed the recommendations in detail. Commissioner Bellavance-Grace will draft a letter from the HRC to the Mayor with our responses and ask all Commissioners to review before the next HRC meeting.

### **Future HRC membership and leadership**

This discussion was tabled to the next HRC meeting at the end of January. To be considered are questions about expectations for the role of Chair and Vice Chair of the HRC; is another leadership model possible? Perhaps a rotating chair? Commissioners are asked to consider these questions for the end of January meeting, along with how they might be willing to exercise their leadership in the coming months.

Commissioners are reminded to encourage applicants to the Commission for its three open seats.

### **Request to co-sponsor a film**

The commission discussed a suggestion to sponsor a film in Northampton, and after discussion decided that this is something the Commission is happy to consider co-sponsoring if another organization were bringing it, but does not have the capacity to plan and present on its own.

### **Safe Cities Ordinance**

Commissioners Loisel and Paik were present at the December City Council meeting and spoke during public comment in support of the Safe Cities Ordinance, which passed City Council with ease. Commissioners were thanked for representing the Commission at that important meeting.

### **Non-Documented Drivers License Campaign**

Commissioners agreed to offer its support for this initiative, sponsored locally by the Pioneer Valley Workers Center. Commissioner Loisel will communicate to them that the Commission believes this is a human rights issue and is willing to offer what support we can in their effort.

**Guest Columns in the Gazette**

Commissioners Paik and Loisel were thanked for their contributions to Human Rights Commission guest columns in November and December. Another Commissioner will be invited to write the next guest column - the Mayor's Task Force on Panhandling report may be a good topic; the Commission will revisit at the end of January meeting.

**All Gender Bathrooms**

Commissioners considered the role of the HRC in advocating for a transition to All Gender Bathrooms in all city buildings, and encouraging private businesses to transition to all gender bathrooms as well. The Commission is in a position to raise awareness and help educate the public. We will return to this conversation at a later meeting date.

**Commissioner Paik moved to adjourn at 7:00 pm. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Miller. Meeting adjourned by unanimous vote.**

**The next meeting will be on January 29th, the fifth Wednesday of the month.**