

Human Rights Commission
Monday, November 9, 2020 – 5:30 p.m.
-Minutes-
Remote Meeting

Present: Vanessa Krawczyk, Interim CAO; Sarah Mitchell Peck; Toni Borge; Maiuzia Alves; Nicole Richon Schoel, LHMC; Jennifer Beloff; Paul Wasserman; Hannah Kimberley

Absent: None.

Also Present: Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken; Councilor Jen Holmgren, liaison to the City Council; Assistant General Counsel Krisna Basu and Human Resources Director Holly Dougwillo, city staff liaisons and four members of the public in total.

1. *Call to Order*

Vanessa Krawczyk, Interim CAO, called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. She advised that this meeting is recorded by video and audio in accordance with state Open Meeting Law as with future meetings of the Human Rights Commission. Consistent with the Governor's orders suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law and banning gatherings of more than 25 people, this meeting is being conducted by remote participation. Additionally, all votes taken by the Human Rights Commission during this and future remote meetings will be by roll call vote. If you are calling in on a phone you can press Star 9 (*9) to request to speak. If you are watching on a computer or device there is a "raise hand" button that you can tap or press to request to speak. Please use either of these options during oral communications to be recognized to speak.

2. *Roll Call and Introduction of Members*

Ms. Krawczyk then called the roll of the Human Rights Commission and introduced the members of the Commission in attendance as follows: Sarah Mitchell Peck; Toni Borge; Maiuzia Alves; Nicole Richon Schoel, LHMC; Jennifer Beloff; Paul Wasserman; Hannah Kimberley. Each member of the Commission spoke briefly of their professional background and interest in Human Rights that led them to seek membership on the Commission. Ms. Krawczyk noted that the Commission will be working with the Mayor's Office, Assistant General Counsel, Krisna Basu and Holly Dougwillo, Human Resources Director, both city staff liaisons to the Commission.

Councilor Jen Holmgren, the City Council's liaison to the Commission expressed that she was honored to serve with the Commission.

Mayor Romeo Theken mentioned her advocacy for Italian Fisherman of Gloucester and as a member of the Gloucester Fishermen's Wives Association, and as a medical and mental health and health insurance advocate for those without a voice on a state and local level. She noted she is also a representative Essex County Commission on the Status of Women. She cited that the Commission is a group that isn't something not many communities have in place saying that the community is very supportive as is her Administration. She offered her thanks to the Commission members for taking on this volunteer commitment.

3. *Election of Officers Discussion*

Ms. Krawczyk then took nominations for the position of Chair of the Commission. Ms. Kimberly was noted as having volunteered as the first Chair of the Commission and will facilitate future meetings. She advised she'd be assisted by herself and the city staff liaisons in that endeavor. A discussion of the members then ensued at Ms. Krawczyk's suggestion to identify a co-Chair to serve with Ms. Kimberly to facilitate the needs of the Commission. **Paul Wasserman**, noting he was retired, and had a wealth of experience as a group facilitator and

would be willing to take on the responsibility of co-Chair. Both **Jen Beloff** and **Toni Borge** offered their support for Mr. Wasserman taking on the role as co-Chair of the Commission.

Holly Dougwillo, City Staff Liaison to the Commission, and Human Resources Director, inquired as to whether she had a voting role on the Commission, voicing her support of Mr. Wasserman as co-Chair as well. **Ms. Krawczyk** clarified that only Commission members would be able to vote on matters, that the City Staff Liaisons were in an advisory role.

MOTION: On a motion by Ms. Beloff, seconded by Ms. Borge, the Human Rights Commission voted by ROLL CALL unanimously to confirm Paul Wasserman as the co-Chair of the Commission.

Responding to a question of who is responsible for taking the minutes of the Commission moving forward from **Councilor Holmgren**, **Ms. Krawczyk** noted that the co-Chairs are responsible for submitting for approval the Commission's agendas and then submission for posting to the City Clerk's Office as well as taking, drafting, finalizing and posting of the Commission's meeting minutes.

A member of the public, **Marsha Andres**, Rockport, member of the Gloucester Racial Justice Team, noted the 15 members of the Team advising that the group is there to lend their support of their membership. She advised they will be attending the Commission's meetings. She was asked by Ms. Krawczyk to email the Mayor's office for the Team's contact information.

4. Review of the Ordinance

Ms. Krawczyk shared with the Commission the Gloucester Code of Ordinance (GCO) sections that guide the Commission and read into the record the purpose of the Commission as stated in the GCO Sec. 2-499 – Purposes as follows:

“(1) Improve the life of city by enlisting individuals and community-based groups in educational programs and campaigns to increase mutual self-respect, harmonious intergroup relations and the peaceful enjoyment of life in our diverse community;

(2) Assist persons in the city who believe that their human or civil rights, as defined by existing local, commonwealth and federal law, have been violated in the city, by providing voluntary mediation for all parties concerned, and informing such people of the local, commonwealth and federal agencies available to address their grievances; and

(3) Work with all city departments, including the school department, commissions and boards, to increase compliance with appropriate local, commonwealth and federal laws and to raise the level of awareness and sensitivity to human rights issues in municipal business with the public.”

Councilor Holmgren asked about how the Commission will be able to ensure confidentiality. **Ms. Krawczyk** advised she would touch base with General Counsel the following day given that they are holding remote meetings which are recorded. She would then touch base with the Commission's City Staff Liaisons and then report back to the Commission. She suggested that there may be a need for the Commission to go into Executive Session if there might be a sensitive subject that needed confidentiality or using other avenues to protect confidentiality for which she'd obtain clarity from General Counsel and then have that discussion as a group at the next meeting. **Mayor Romeo Theken** mentioned some of the issues associated with Executive Sessions briefly.

5. Future Meeting Schedule

Ms. Krawczyk opened a discussion with the Commission as to the frequency of the Commission's future meetings and what day would be optimal for the members, reminding them of the Council meetings and Council subcommittee meetings Councilor Holmgren must attend during the month to take into consideration. After polling the Commission members, it was determined that the meetings would take place the second Monday of the month at 5:30 p.m. She encouraged members to submit agenda items to their co-Chairs in advance of a meeting agenda to be posted.

Ms. Beloff inquired as to what email the Commission should use to receive their communications. Ms. Krawczyk advised it would be the members' personal email address. She then asked Krisna Basu, Assistant General Counsel and City Staff Liaison to the Commission to touch on some Open Meeting Law matters the Commission members should be aware of. Ms. Basu noted out that as this is a public body, deliberations must be open to the public, but that she would bring some guidelines to the next meeting of the Commission. Mayor Romeo Theken weighed in briefly about possibly creating an email account with other providers. A commission member suggested they could create a Gmail account. Responding to an inquiry by **Ms. Borge** as to Open Meeting Law regarding meeting off line to better get to know her fellow Commission members, **Ms. Krawczyk** reminded the Commission that they can't meet if there is a quorum of the Commission membership, and that the guidance they'll be provided at the next meeting will help assist the Commission moving forward whether in person or by email.

Ms. Krawczyk confirmed that the next meeting of the Commission would take place on Monday, December 14, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. via Zoom and that the members would be contacted with their link via an email invitation.

6. Other Business

There were no matters for the Commission's consideration under this heading.

7. Adjournment

By unanimous ROLL CALL VOTE, the Commission adjourned the meeting at 6:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dana C. Jorgenson
Substitute Recorder