

Human Rights Commission
Monday February 22, 2021
Minutes

Call to Order

Hannah Kimberley called the meeting to order at 5:35 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.

Roll Call:

Hannah Kimberley then called the roll of the Members of the Human Rights Commission.

Present: Sarah Mitchell Peck; Toni Borge; Maiuzia Alves; Nicole Richone Schoel, LHMC; Jennifer Beloff; Paul Wasserman; Hannah Kimberley

Absent: None

Also present: Councilor Jen Holmgren, liaison to the City Council; Assistant General Counsel Krisna Basu and Human Resources Director Holly Dougwillo, city staff liaisons; Vanessa Krawczyk, Interim CAO; guest Kate Manchet (see below); and two members of the public including John Serroof from the Gloucester Racial Justice Team

Commissioner Paul Wasserman moved that the minutes be accepted and Commissioner Hannah Kimberley seconded. The minutes from January 25, 2021 were approved by roll call.

The Digital Divide: A Project of the Essex County Community Foundation

Councilor Jen Holmgren introduced and thanked guest Kate Manchet who provided an overview of the recently completed Digital Divide Report undertaken by the Foundation.

The Foundation invests in "systems philanthropy" through efforts to strengthen all 34 cities and towns in the County. This project, undertaken with Tufts University, engaged a broad cross-section of community leaders in order to determine the status and needs of all involved areas with regard to digital access. The study focused on issues of Access; Equipment; Literacy; and Privacy.

The report, soon to be released, will identify the Foundation's planned investments in Digital Equity across all communities through Advocacy; Education; and Collaboration. The Foundation will encourage

collaborative grant applications from both post-industrial or “Gateway Cities” and rural areas as part of its “systems” approach.

The Commission members thanked Ms. Manchet for the presentation and will obtain a copy of the report upon its release.

John Seroff from the UU Racial Justice Team expressed questions about joining the Commission and other Boards and training to reduce barriers to access.

Translation Services Update

Discussion regarding the availability of translation equipment for City of Gloucester had been raised at a prior meeting.

Commissioner Toni Borge researched languages spoken in Gloucester Public Schools which include 6% Spanish speakers; 3% Portuguese; and a wide variety of other languages such as Arabic, Italian, Swahli, Viet Nameese, Urdu and Creole. Close to 10% of Gloucester residents speak a language other than English.

Commissioner Sarah Peck spoke about Microsoft Suite. It provides 15 languages, 100 best pages for translation, 3primary languages, review and live translation feeds. It can translate a 300 page document in minutes. Microsoft Teams can provide live translation

Commissioner Paul Wasserman had reviewed all City web sites and found most were accessible with one or two clicks.

Commissioner Maiuza Alves mentioned that deaf and hard of hearing people would need a sign language interpreter.

Council Member Jen Holgren asked if a pilot project to make portable translation equipment might be explored. Hannah Kimberly offered to do so.

GHRC Page on City Website

In discussion with Ryan Knowles (city It) Commissioner Hannah Kimberley learned that all Gloucester commissions are responsible for their own web sites. Human Resources director Holly Dougwillo offered to help Commission when this is underway.

Ongoing Review of Other Human Rights Commissions Structures and Processes

A Human Rights Subcommittee: Councilor Jen Holmgren, Sarah Peck, Nicole Richone-Schoel and Jen Beloff met on February 11, 2021. (See attached Minutes.) Discussion involved review of intake forms and procedures from other Massachusetts community Commissions. Further work involves identifying parameters, jurisdiction and confidentiality and the committee hopes to seek input from the city’s legal counsel. Importance of confidentiality was expressed by all members.

Commissioner Sarah Peck reported on Arlington's Human Rights Commission handling of complaints. Complaints go to one designated person each month to establish contacts and interviews. And might refer to another agency. They document on a spreadsheet and looked for patterns. They respond within 24 to 48 hours. A draft intake form will be shared with all members for review and feedback. The subcommittee's next meeting on March 11, 2021.

Councilor Jen Holmgren will review subcommittee minutes. Other Members discussed confidentiality.

Commissioner Jennifer Beloff mentioned possible partnering with the Cape Ann N Museum on various projects and will invite Miranda Aisling the Museum's Education Manager to our next meeting.

Commissioner Toni Borge suggested putting information about Women's History Month on the Web page.

Disability Rights Commission Commissioner Hannah Kimberly stated that we are actively recruiting for members for the Disability Rights Committee. This is a subcommission under the Human Rights Commission and only one of seven members have been appointed. Please have any interested persons sent a letter and a current resume to mayor@gloucester-ma.gov.

Community Events for Future Collaboration

Commissioner Jennifer Beloff brought up the subject of Women's History Month (March) and similar community activities that the Commission might partner with in future. Some are currently being planned by the Cape Ann Museum and the Library. Commissioner Toni Beloff can extend an invitation to a Library representative for the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:35 p.m. by roll call vote.

Submitted by Paul Wasserman