

CITY OF REVERE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

October 7, 2021, Meeting

5:00 pm EDT

Location: City Hall Council Chambers or via Zoom

Meeting Minutes

1) Chairperson Janine Grillo Marra calls meeting to order.

2) Roll Call of Commissioners

- Lynn Alexis – present remotely on Zoom.
- All other Commissioners are present in person.
- [Jalon Fowler has resigned from Commission due to Law School commitment.]

3) Arrive & Settle - Brief Silence

4) Approval of Minutes from the September 2nd Meeting.

Kathi Reinstein MOTIONS to approve the minutes and Rev Tim Bogertman seconds; All are in favor.

5) Pending Topic Update - HRC Resources Webpage Project:

a. Project Leader Chaimaa Hossaini, Vice Chair

Chairperson Janine Grillo Marra shared information as Vice Chair was not present at the start of this topic update. All recommendations from the last monthly meeting have been incorporated into the spreadsheet as well as some additional September 11th resources from Dr Garcia. Since a Director should be in place fairly soon, we will revisit this project in more depth at that time.

6) Topics for Discussion:

a. Recent Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression Training for Commissioners

Chairperson Janine Grillo Marra shared that the HRC underwent a two-day training on Sept 30-Oct 1 and requested the group to share takeaways from the training. Here is a summary:

- All are grateful for the training, the planning team, the facilitators, and the opportunity to spend time together to forge a connection after a year of meeting mostly via Zoom.
- All aspects of the training touched on our Mission Statement.
- Helped us be more open and understand each other, our roles, share stories and realize how we each truly love the community
- Learned how to best move forward together with our work within a sense of comradery
- The training was not about taking from one group or adding one group to another, but more about moving from a scarcity model into more belonging and community.
- We are all shaped by our history and background. The training confirmed this and allowed for deeper conversations on systems of racism and oppression.
- At the core, we are all humans. Marginalization and dominance are constructs we need to investigate.
- We need to continue training in an ongoing way
- We would love to see other City Committees and Bodies participate in this type of work.

b. HRC and RevereTV Collaboration

Chairperson Janine Grillo Marra shared that Bob Dunbar, Executive Director of RevereTV, would like to offer an ongoing HRC show, possibly monthly, where we can have deeper conversations on appropriate human rights topics affecting the community.

This would likely happen in the first quarter of 2022 and the logistical details would need to be addressed regarding schedule, format, guest speakers, community involvement etc.

At this time Chair Grillo Marra asked the Commissioners for input on important topics to consider. Here is a summary:

Preliminary consideration is the need to clarify HRC role in the community, get community input on topics and ensure we have translation services

- Introduce new Director
- Storytelling – both that which has not been told and needs healing as well as positive stories to celebrate
- Cultural understanding
- Policing
- Healthcare
- Education system
- Gentrification
- Affordable housing
- Faith-based and healing conversations with various community leaders
- Explain how City government works

c. Pledge of Allegiance

Chairperson Janine Grillo Marra shared that a few members of the community have expressed concern that the HRC does not start meetings stating the Pledge of Allegiance. She also shared that after some research, this is not a mandate from the Mayor – it is up to each Board. And not all Boards state the Pledge, or it may not be consistent at each meeting.

Although this decision is at the discretion of the Chair, Grillo Marra requests an open discussion on the topic and does not want to make a unilateral decision at this time. She expresses her concerns that the Pledge may not feel inclusive to everyone because there is no separation of Church and State (those who do not believe in God or use that language) as well as those who may not feel their experience is liberty and justice for all.

Each Commissioner had an opportunity to comment during this preliminary conversation:

- Lynn Alexis – Agrees with Chair Grillo Marra’s concerns yet personally is comfortable with Pledge. Suggests it could be voluntary.
- Chief Bright – Somewhat conflicted. We were raised with the Pledge yet understands regarding Church-State concerns. Not stating the Pledge does not mean one is not patriotic. Decision needs more consideration overall.

- Kourou Pich - Agrees with Chair Grillo Marra's concerns that the language may not align with certain people and not create a sense of belonging. We need to look at our group and how to respond to the whole community (including youth).
- Kathi Reinstein – Agrees with Chief Bright. Is an overall proponent of the Pledge but does understand that certain words may not feel inclusive or create a sense of belonging.
- Vice Chair Chaimaa Hossaini – As a Muslim, the Pledge does not resonate for her and has concerns about 'justice for all' since that is not always felt.
- Rev Tim Bogertman – Not a personal problem for him yet understands the possible concerns of the language for others. Our Mission Statement is powerful and related to our city (but not country). Suggests we could consider both, the Pledge followed by Mission Statement as a reflection of what is and our aspiration.
- Dr Garcia – Needs to do more research and investigation. This is a controversial topic in the schools. Examine the words. We still have significant injustice and inequity. Feels all the words we need are contained in our Mission Statement.
- Rachid Moukhabir – No strong feeling. Understands this could be a problem for some and we are trying to be a voice for everyone. Agrees that our Mission Statement is more reflective and that is why we created it with much consideration.
- Chief Callahan – Not sure why every Board does not state the Pledge. May be simply different for each Committee. He is accustomed to stating the Pledge. Not a problem for him but understands we need to consider this from different perspectives. The key is to remember we are all Americans and how can we do things better.

d. Columbus Day – Indigenous People's Day

Chairperson Janine Grillo Marra reviewed that there is a significant movement on the State and Federal levels to change the name to Indigenous People's Day. Yesterday (Oct 6) Mayor Janey signed an executive order declaring the second Monday of October to be Indigenous People's Day in the City of Boston. Revere has a strong Italian American community. We do not want to cancel one group for another, yet we must consider this issue. Here is a summary of the thoughtful discussion:

- October is Italian heritage month. How do we celebrate Italian Americans and Indigenous Peoples?
- Celebrating Columbus Day and Indigenous People's Day on the same day or weekend is not appropriate because we are celebrating the oppressor and the oppressed.
- People are proud of their heritage and should be able to celebrate it. This is about inclusion, not taking away. We are all Immigrants aside from Indigenous people.
- Columbus Day was initiated to recognize the unfair, brutal lynching of 11 Italians in New Orleans in 1891.
- Italian Heritage should not be associated with Columbus Day.
- Why was Columbus selected? He did not even represent Italy when he arrived here.
- There has been historical misinformation. Columbus has a complex, dark history involving violence and genocide which has affected many generations.
- Columbus is associated with discovering America and there have been several waves of Immigrants over the years, but Indigenous People were here first.

- Need to distinguish between cultural celebration and genocide.
- Change can be fearful.
- Goal is to recolonize.
- Recognizing Indigenous People is long overdue. They were here first.
- We know more and know better so must do better. Need to right a wrong.
- Need further conversations with City officials to see what they need for additional education in our community.

Dr Garcia MOTIONS recommendation to the Mayor and City Council to replace Columbus Day with Indigenous People's Day and to select a different day in October to celebrate Italian Americans. Chief Bright seconds the motion. All are in favor.

7) REMAP (Racial Equity Municipal Action Plan) Survey Update

a. Reuben Kantor, REMAP Team Member

REMAP team plans to send a survey to HRC members to get their input. Watch email for survey.

8) Other Business

Lynn Alexis asks why "Equity" was removed from the position, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Director. Chairperson Janine Grillo Marra states that this was a recommendation from the City Council. The job description/duties were not changed, and it was important to proceed with starting the process of job posting and interviews to have someone in place soon. Kim Hanton, Chief of Staff, did some research and saw that this position uses different titles across the State, including Diversity and Inclusion Director, so this is not uncommon.

9) Public Forum - NONE

10) Adjournment

Chief Callahan MOTIONS to adjourn, Kathi Reinstein seconds; All are in favor.

Meeting adjourned. We will reconvene on November 4th for the next full HRC monthly meeting.