



CITY OF PROVIDENCE

Jorge O. Elorza, Mayor

Meeting of the Providence Human Relations Commission

June 13th, 2019 5:30PM

City Hall Conference Room 201

25 Dorrance Street, Providence RI 02903

I. Welcome

The meeting of the Providence Human Relations Commission was called to order at 6:03pm. Five of eight Commission members were present, constituting a quorum.

- **Present:** Chair Patricia LaSalle, Vice-Chair Chace Baptista, Commissioner Cesar Teo, Commissioner Celeste Terry-Lo, Commissioner Kai Lo Muscio - **5**
- **Staff:** Sol Taubin, Executive Director of the Providence Human Relations Commission

B. Approval of Prior Minutes

Upon motion by Commissioner LoMuscio, seconded by Commissioner Teo, approval of prior meeting minutes was put to a vote, passing favorably:

- **Ayes (unanimous):** Chair Patricia LaSalle, Vice-Chair Chace Baptista, Commissioner Cesar Teo, Commissioner Celeste Terry-Lo, Commissioner Kai Lo Muscio - **5**

II. Orders of Business

A. Director's Report

Director Taubin provided updates on the department's work, including the following:

1. Administrative Follow-Up

- **Annual Retreat**

Director Taubin shared that she had worked with Chair LaSalle to plan the Commission's annual retreat, and that it had had been scheduled for Saturday, August 3rd, 2019 from 9AM-3PM in City Hall. The agenda included a strategic planning session; a discussion and vote to create infrastructure to better resource the Commission's work; gender diversity training by TGI Network of Rhode Island, and training on civil rights enforcement by the Rhode Island Commission for Human Rights.

- **Bylaws Review**

Director Taubin noted that in reviewing the bylaws for attendance policies with Chair LaSalle and legal counsel, she had identified an opportunity to build capacity while potentially solving for the Commission's struggle to meet quorum. Director Taubin outlined the Commission's functions as a department, including cultural outreach and community-building, education, protection of rights, expansion of rights, policy/advocacy, and administration, noting which of these functions were actively supported by the Board of Commissioners. She identified

cultural outreach and events, protection of rights (hearing cases), and policy/advocacy as functions the board of commissioners could consider establishing subcommittees for, with additional functions being supported by the board of commissioners in an advisory role. Director Taubin proposed that the Commission as a whole move to quarterly meetings, with subcommittees meeting at the regularly scheduled Commission meeting times in the interim to more efficiently advance work. Commissioners were amenable to the idea.

- **Flyer**
Director Taubin shared the edited Call for Applications flyer with Commissioners. Commissioners were unanimously pleased with the results.

2. Project Updates

- **LEP**
Director Taubin provided an update on language access initiatives in her portfolio, including the development of a language access toolkit codifying processes, procedures, and resources available to support LEP individuals; the purchase of simultaneous interpretation equipment for city-wide use; and the development of a community interpretation framework to support language access city-wide. Commissioners were extremely pleased with advancements in language access work City-wide.
- **ADA**
Director Taubin provided an update on accessibility initiatives in her portfolio, including the convening of a working group to audit city resources and develop a rubric to triage infrastructure-related complaints in the short-term. Director Taubin noted the intention to address information technology and employment accessibility within the scope of the working group. Commissioners were pleased to see movement and collaboration on the part of the administration to tackle accessibility issues thoughtfully.
- **SOI**
Director Taubin provided an update on source of income discrimination protection initiatives in her portfolio, noting that the proposed city ordinance codifying these protections had not yet been heard in committee, but that an enforcement strategy had been developed were the proposed ordinance to move. Director Taubin gave an overview of the complaint process, noting intake, investigation, conciliation, and hearing stages, and noted that in the absence of funds to support staffing the Commission to execute such a function, the proposed enforcement strategy would be to go out to bid for investigatory and conciliatory services, to reconstitute and train a hearing committee within the Commission, and to automate transitions in the City's 3-1-1 system. Director Taubin also shared projections of potential case-load in a

hypothetical pilot year. Commissioners were pleased with the strategy. Director Taubin also noted progress in developing a partnership with the Providence Housing Authority to facilitate workshops on the HCVP program.

- **Financial Inclusion**

Director Taubin provided an update on work to expand financial inclusion in her portfolio, including additional conversations with banking partners to accept IDPVD as a primary form of identification to open a bank account, efforts to convene banking partners in offering low or no-fee accounts and accessible credit products, and the development of a city-wide strategy to invest mission related deposits in ways that support community development and financial inclusion efforts. Commissioners were also pleased with advancements in preliminary financial inclusion and accessibility work spearheaded by Director Taubin, and the receptiveness of the Finance Department and Councilor Kerwin to this work.

3. Advocacy Updates

- **SOI passed Senate**

Director Taubin noted that proposed legislation codifying source of income antidiscrimination protections in the general assembly had passed the Senate but was expected to fail in the House. She noted that all other bills the department had supported were held for further study.

4. Event Updates

- **LGBTQIA+ Protections Event**

Director Taubin reminded Commissioners about the Commission's upcoming participation in Millennial RI and RI Pride's *Out at Work: Strategies for Being Out & Protected in the Workplace* event, to take place at the Southside Cultural Center on Tuesday, June 11th from 6-8pm. Director Taubin noted she would be there on behalf of the Commission and that Commissioner Kai Lo Muscio would serve as one of the panelists.

- **Pan-African Heritage Celebration**

Director Taubin reminded Commissioners about the Commission's upcoming Pan-African Heritage Celebration event, in partnership with Oasis International, to take place at City Hall on Thursday, July 25th from 5:30-7pm.

B. Questions & Discussion

1. Project, Advocacy & Event Updates

No additional questions or thoughts were shared by Commissioners on the updates provided by Director Taubin at this time.

2. Annual Retreat

Commissioners shared that the schedule proposed by Director Taubin and Chair LaSalle was well put together and the date worked for those in the room. No

additional questions or announcements were shared by Commissioners at this time.

3. Bylaws, Attendance & Quorum

Commissioner Terry-Lo noted her support for quarterly Commission meetings with interim committee work. Commissioner Teo expressed that he believed the new model would be beneficial in many ways, allowing the Commission to proactively accomplish work and see results. Commissioner LoMuscio noted they felt the same way, noting that the scopes and powers of the subcommittees should be well defined. All Commissioners present unanimously supported the new model. Chair LaSalle asked Director Taubin to include voting on the formation of the new committees and meeting structure in the retreat agenda.

4. Outreach & Recruitment

Chair LaSalle noted that in addition to attendance, part of the reason the Commission struggled to meet quorum was due to applications not coming in for the open seats on the Commission, despite Director Taubin announcing a call for applications earlier in the year and doing direct outreach to advocacy coalitions and cultural organizations. Commissioner Baptista proposed establishing a subcommittee for recruitment. Chair LaSalle noted the outreach committee could take that on, but she hoped the Commission as a whole would be involved in recruiting new applicants. Chair LaSalle noted she had asked Director Taubin to draft a template outreach letter to invite active community members to apply to serve on the Commission, and shared the letter that was drafted. Commissioner Teo noted he very much liked the outreach letter, as many communities may not be aware of the work of the Commission. Chair LaSalle asked that each Commissioner send Director Taubin a list of 2-5 community members they believed would be great assets to the Commission by the next Friday for Director Taubin to share the outreach letter with, and the Mayor's team to follow up with applicants.

III. Closing

A. Next Steps

Director Taubin summarized administrative next steps resulting from the Commission's meeting, including:

- Finalizing agenda and logistics for the Commission's annual retreat, to be held Saturday, August 3rd 2019 from 9AM-3PM at City Hall;
- Including votes to constitute outreach, policy and hearing committees in the Annual Retreat agenda, as well as to shift the Commission's meeting schedule as detailed above; developing materials to support committees' planning and implementation processes;
- Continuing to work, and provide updates to the Commission, on language access, infrastructure accessibility, source of income antidiscrimination protections, and financial inclusion initiatives.

B. Announcements

Commissioner LoMuscio and Director Taubin reminded Commissioners that the State's annual celebration of LGBTQIA+ Pride was coming up on June 15th.

Commissioner Teo noted that in reflecting following Bishop Tobin issuing a series of chilling homophobic remarks, he felt the board of commissioners should be more responsive to events happening in the community, taking a posture on situations that affect Providence's diverse constituencies. Commissioner Baptista agreed, asserting it is the Commission's role to stand up in today's political climate. Commissioner LoMuscio asked whether the Commission issuing statements on the website would be one way to address Commissioner Teo's concerns. Director Taubin noted she would be happy to draft statements for Commissioners, but in the event of a time-sensitive statement, the Commission would not be able to meet to approve the statement. She noted she was happy to issue statements on behalf of the department, but did not want to speak on behalf of the board of commissioners without their feedback, and asked what process would work for Commissioners. Chair LaSalle noted that perhaps having Director Taubin draft a statement and send it out for review might work, but that she would want to check with legal counsel to make sure this process would not violate the Open Meetings Act while being as transparent as possible. In the interim, Director Taubin was to continue writing statements on behalf of the department. A discussion on process for issuing statements was deferred to a future meeting.

C. Adjournment

Upon motion by Commissioner Baptista, seconded by Commissioner Terry-Lo, adjournment was put to a vote, passing favorably:

- **Ayes (unanimous):** Chair Patricia LaSalle, Vice-Chair Chace Baptista, Commissioner Cesar Teo, Commissioner Celeste Terry-Lo, Commissioner Kai Lo Muscio - 5