

Pittsfield Human Rights Commission
Minutes – August 19, 2019
6:00 PM, Council Chambers
Pittsfield City Hall, 70 Allen St., Pittsfield, MA

Members Present: Drew Herzig, Chair
Marietta Rapetti Cawse
Jessica Christensen
Robert Sykes
Peter Marchetti
Jay Lopez

Members Absent: Christine Codella, Clerk

1. **Call to Order** – Chair Drew Herzig called the meeting to order and notified all those in attendance that pursuant to Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 30A, Section 20, all attendees are hereby informed that a video and audio recording is being made of this meeting.
2. **Roll Call of HRC Members** – Drew Herzig announced the roll call of members present.
3. **Approval of Minutes** – A motion was made by Peter Marchetti to approve the June 3rd, 2019 minutes. Seconded by Marietta Rapetti Cawse, approved unanimously.
4. **Public Comment** – Mr. Alexander Blumin expressed his complaints and issues with the HRC.
5. **Presentation to the HRC by CJ Hoss, City Planner and Justine Dodds, Community Development, on the Tyler Street project.** Marietta Rapetti Cawse introduced Mr. Hoss and Ms. Dodds and asked to hear the latest developments concerning Tyler St., Dalton Ave., Woodlawn Ave. area. Mr. Hoss discussed their revitalization projects that focus on reactivating the area and mentioned several local partners that are participating. Ms. Dodds discussed funds available through federal and state grants obtained and their appropriation, including for affordable housing. Mr. Hoss and Ms. Dodds gave detailed, informative presentations on their vision and progress for the Tyler Street area.
6. **Unfinished Business** – Drew Herzig discussed his concern regarding the city’s policy of publishing personal information of volunteer commission members. He asked other commission members if they had been informed of this policy when they applied, and all said they were not.

Peter Marchetti noted that we are a public commission and as such, the member’s information should be made public so concerns by the general public can reach members. Drew reiterated that he believes anyone applying for membership should be informed at that time that this information will be made public. Peter noted that he will work with the mayor’s office to get this information to prospective members at time of application.

There was more discussion about what the basic function of the HRC should be. Drew Herzig noted that the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law does not require city board meetings to offer public comment and that public comment is a courtesy and if we do decide to offer it, we can set a time limit.

Peter made a motion to add a line on the city's website under Human Rights Commission to read "The Human Rights Commission agrees and forms decisions based on United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Seconded by Marietta Rapetti Cawse. Approved unanimously. Peter will be run it by the city solicitor and will add to next month's agenda for formal approval.

Drew Herzig contacted the mayor's office about a general meeting with members of other city boards and commissions. They would not be interested but suggested we check with the city solicitor to see if we would be violating the open meeting law. As long as proper procedure is met, we would not be in violation. It was agreed that this will be tabled for now. There was some discussion about the direction and function of the HRC commission.

7. The HRC election of officers has been postponed until our next meeting. All members agreed.
8. **New Business** – Jessica Christensen made a motion to approve a resolution to state that the HRC condemns the white supremacist ideologies that are fanning the flames of domestic terrorism. Every human being has the right to enjoy freedom of conscience, freedom of speech, freedom from fear and freedom from want. Seconded by Jay Lopez. Approved unanimously.

Drew Herzig noted that Bryan House from the DA's office is too busy currently to meet with the HRC. Cara Henderson, DOJ will make a presentation in the future to the public.

In response to Mr. Alexander Blumin's complaints, Peter Marchetti made a motion to approve his suggestion that he draft a formal response letter to be sent to Mr. Blumin stating that the HRC no longer accepts complaints. Peter will draft this letter and present it to the commission at our next meeting. Seconded by Jessica Christensen. Approved unanimously.

There was a short discussion on how to recruit new HRC members. Robert Sykes made a motion that he contact the Superintendent of schools to discuss the possibility of inviting high school students to contribute to the HRC commission. Seconded by Marietta Rapetti Cawse. Approved unanimously. Drew Herzig made a motion that someone from the DA's office be invited to speak at the September meeting. Seconded by Jay Lopez. Approved unanimously.

Our next meeting is scheduled for 6 PM on Tuesday, September 17, 2019 at the Ralph Froio Center

9. **Reports of Commissions** – Drew Herzig was contacted by Berkshire Pride about being a co-sponsor for the Transgender Day Remembrance. We will discuss at the September meeting.

A motion to adjourn was made by Peter Marchetti, seconded by Jay Lopez. Approved unanimously.

