

## Human Rights Commission

July 29, 2021

Monthly Meeting

### Present

Mike Henson, Commissioner

Christopher Spicer-Hankle, Commissioner

Lara Versari, Commissioner

Denise Capers, Director

### Guests Present

Cara Henderson, U.S. Attorney's Office

Greg Dorchak, U.S. Attorney's Office

### Members of the Public Present

Elaine Schear

Maria

### Approval of meeting minutes from June 10, 2021

Commissioner Mike moved to approve the minutes from the prior meeting held on June 10, 2021. Commissioners Lara and Christopher agreed to make the minutes official.

### Online promotion of Immigrant Stories project

Commissioner Mike confirmed that the HRC webpage was updated to include a link to the write-up from Tufts Daily.

### Social media coverage of June 27 HRC event in Davis Square

Commissioner Christopher made the request to Nancy Bacci to post information on the HRC Facebook page highlighting the commission's presence in Davis Square on June 27, 2021. The post has not occurred yet. Christopher noted there was at least one photo of the group available to be included in the post.

### Guest speakers on Anti-hate/Anti-bias efforts

Commissioner Christopher introduced his guests from the U.S. Attorney's Office. First, he gave background on the HRC's prior discussions on the topics, including note of the events at Noor restaurant earlier in the year, the offering of bystander training (last year and upcoming), online form to report hate incidents through the SPD webpage (now available to be submitted anonymously), and voiced concerns of one town resident earlier in the year. The intention for the invitation was for the commission to hear the legal point of view and to see what further training and tools could be pursued in the matter.

Greg Dorchak began, noting his work in the U.S. Attorney's Office dealing with disability rights, hate speech, and hate crimes. His work covers all of Massachusetts. He stated that while his office has worked cases stemming from hate and bias, there were no cases in relation to hate incidents and disability rights.

Guest Dorchak informed the commission of the U.S. Supreme Court's official definition what constitutes a hate crime and that it must be "directly motivated" by hate. He illustrated this very narrow definition with the 2018 case of threats being made African American athletes. In that case the threat was violent and true, and it used racist language; but not found to be directly motivated by hate. When motive is not found to be directly linked to hate, in accordance with the Supreme Court ruling, civil law measures could be pursued.

Guest Henderson informed the commission about the outreach efforts, occurring in both the criminal and civil domains. She highlighted programs, such as Child Safe, which covers children and families in bullying and hate incidents. Much of their work is done in coordination with the FBI and local police departments. A newly-formed Civil Rights Task Force requires every police department to assign one officer to work with the U.S. Attorney's Office in collaboration with these matters.

#### Director Denise Capers segment

Director Capers asked the commission and others present for input into the qualities they would like to see in the new role of Commission Coordinator. Input from all attendees are listed below.

- Leadership
- Ability to interface with other groups, such as the community, government, religious groups, and businesses
- Form partnerships with other groups
- Navigate city regulations
- Background in human rights
- Legal background
- Awareness of budget process
- Facilitate HRC in accessing funding
- Willingness to remove barriers for public participation in HRC, such as child care and low income
- Recruiting
- Familiar with/live in Somerville
- Promote inclusivity
- Diversify representation in the commission
- Provide more visibility
- Adept with social media

#### Next meeting

Thursday, August 12, 2021