



Somerville Human Rights Commission
Monthly Meeting Agenda
May 23, 2013



The monthly public meeting of the Human Rights Commission was held on May 23 at 7:00 p.m. at 165 Broadway, Somerville, MA 02145.

Commissioners attending: Ashraf Hegazy, Lince Semerzier, Mahesh Limbu, Robina Bhasin, Biswa Sapkota, Ross Richmond, and John Robinson.

Also attending: Sonja Darai (Office of Somerville Commissions, City of Somerville)

I. Quorum Change Process

- HRC Chair Hegazy proposed to request the Board of Alderman change the Human Rights Commission's ordinance quorum rule to state "a minimum of five commissioners will constitute a quorum."
- A Motion was made by Ross Richmond and seconded by Biswa Sapkota
- The Motion passed unanimously by the Human Rights Commission to request the Board of Alderman change the Human Rights Commission's ordinance quorum rule to state "a minimum of five commissioners will constitute a quorum."

II. Q&A from Director's Report

- Handout is the monthly Office of Somerville Commissions report
- Updates: new HRC commissioners this month are Lince Semerzier and Mahesh Limbu
- Mayor's Open Letter: commissioners understood that the Chair has prerogative for urgent decision matters but strongly urges a full review of a letter by all members before signing future letters. Additionally, commissioners recommend caution for acting on rumors. However, the commissioners felt the effect of the letter was positive and worth while.

III. Continuing Business

- Discussion of the following issues were postponed because the sponsoring commissioner on these matters was not in attendance to present concerns.
 - Discussion of Health Director Paulette Renault-Caragianes' Letter-to-the-Editor March 2012
 - Discussion of the City's cancellation of May 2012 HRC meeting

IV: New Business

- Create HRC Case Review Committee and Brief Case Review
 - HRC Chair Hegazy proposed to create HRC Case Review Committee as laid out in the City of Somerville's Human Rights Commission ordinance.
 - A motion was made by Ross Richmond and seconded by Lince Semerzier.

- The Motion passed unanimously by the Human Rights Commission to create HRC Case Review Committee as laid out in the City of Somerville’s Human Rights Commission ordinance.
 - Commissioners Ashraf Hegazy, Mahesh Limbu, Robina Bhasin, and John Robinson are members of the new HRC Case Review Committee.
- Cases were not reviewed but the commissioners discussed a proposal by Director of Somerville Commissions Sonja Darai to have a four-hour training to the commissioners about the HRC ordinance, case review rules and procedures, and process for the commission. Commissioners agreed and it was planned to try to have the training during June on an upcoming Saturday.
- New Programs Presentation
 - Know Your Rights Campaign and Outreach Strategy
 - Sonja Darai presented a brief summary of the KYR Campaign.
 - HRC commissioners who are not on the Case Review Committee will help with the Campaign.
 - Human Rights Ordinance Committee
 - Sonja Darai presented a proposal to organize a fast response team (maybe called “civil rights committee”) that could go with Darai to a business that there is a credible complaint by an unwilling complainant to move forward with a case. The committee would organize a group meeting within a day or two with the head of the business or organization to educate about the City of Somerville human rights ordinance and warn that violations could be pursued if the situation worsened.
 - The commissioners discussed and plan to review for the next meeting.
 - Chair of HRC Election
 - Current HRC Chair reported that he would step down from the position in the coming months though remain as a commissioner.
 - He asked that commissioners consider their capacity to take up the responsibilities of chair.
 - He asked the commission to organize an election in a few months.

V. Review of assigned tasks for action items and events

- Commissioners will participate in a four-hour ordinance and case training on an upcoming Saturday
- Sonja Darai and Ashraf Hegazy will facilitate a four-hour ordinance and case training on an upcoming Saturday
- Commissioners will work to give five hours each month for commission work including attending outside community events, introduce themselves as HRC commissioners, and encourage new people to attend (and potential join) the commission. Additional tasks will evolve from the two committees for Case Review and Know Your Rights.

VI. The HRC meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

The next public meeting of the HRC will be
June 27th at 165 Broadway from 7-8:30pm.

The Human Rights Commission is supported by the City of Somerville's Health Department through the:



Office of Somerville Commissions

- Somerville Commission for Women
- Human Rights Commission
- Multicultural Affairs Commission
- LGBT Community Outreach and Issues



Public Health
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Program of the Somerville Health Department

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