



City of Chelsea

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

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Mark C. Rossi, Esq.,
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Minutes of the March 27, 2018 Meet & Greet with the Chelsea Collaborative and the Chelsea Human Rights Commission

Members present for start of the Meet & Greet: Rossi, Fenton, and newest appointed board member Olivia Anne Walsh. Also present were HRC staffers Pam Johnson and Liz Caiazza. HRC members Whitley and Carella joined after meeting began, absent were members Essen and Power. State Senator Sal Di Domenico was also present for a portion of the meeting. The meeting was conducted in Spanish and in English, with translation to and from both languages provided by Gladys Vega, Director of the Chelsea Collaborative.

Ms. Vega began the meeting with a welcome and introductions of several people closely associated with the Chelsea Collaborative. Also introduced were many private citizens and even several high school students. Members of the HRC also introduced themselves, as did staff to the HRC. The event drew a crowd of approximately 100 people.

HRC Chair Rossi discussed the role of the HRC. He mentioned common types of discrimination to educate the group about the mission of the HRC as well as the practical function of it. In sum, Rossi outlined the process that included an intake performed by HRC staff in the Chelsea Law Department; investigation by that staff; and then, where a viable claim for discrimination may exist, eventual referral to the Membership as a Board for the Board's consideration and ultimate disposition, which may include mediation, legal referral, or involvement of the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination. Rossi pointed out that different groups of individuals enjoy protection under existing law against discrimination. He cautioned that if a member of the public felt they may have a claim, the appropriate course would be to contact the HRC through staff so that staff could conduct the proper intake and investigation. Rossi

then excused himself to attend a different City meeting, whereupon Vice Chair Carella led the discussion and fielded questions from the public.

Several members of the public had specific questions about whether, under the facts they then presented, they experienced discrimination. Carella addressed the group and reminded them the evening was not for answering specific questions about whether discrimination had occurred but merely to point out that there was a new public body that had been reconstituted for the sole purpose of investigating such claims, and that the proper avenue to get the claim before the Commission was not to approach individual Board Members in passing but to follow the well-defined process of completing an Intake interview or form and letting the process proceed by way of the Law Department.

Some residents inquired about the relationship between the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination and the HRC, Caiazza detailed that although the City Solicitor does the investigations that they are not “legal representation” for any applicants for the HRC or MDC, and that some applicants may be directed to forward their complaints to the MDC that the two commissions were not affiliated.

One of the students from CHS asked about discrimination and other school violations. Carella responded that school-related incidents were investigated separately through the Superintendent’s referral to the Law Department: the HRC had no role in anything school-related.

Local State Senator Sal Di Domenico expressed the importance that residents need to attend not only the HRC meetings but also the School Committee and City Council meeting to voice their concerns over all issues that concern the Community of Chelsea, he also praised the City for finally appointing a HRC, which has been long overdue.

It was communicated to the group that the City solicitor’s staff had posted the intake form to the city web page, in both English and Spanish for residents to complete if needed.

It was announced that all residents and students would be welcome to attend the HRC regular monthly meeting held Thursday March, 29 2018@ 5:30, in room 102 of the Chelsea City Hall.