



# City of Chelsea

## HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

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### Members

Mark C. Rossi, Esq.,  
Chairperson

Susana Carella, Vice  
Chairperson

Amy E. Fenton

Olivia Anne Walsh, Esq.

Maria Belen Power

Rev. Sandra G. Whitley,  
DMin.

Minutes of the  
May 3, 2018  
Meeting of the  
Chelsea Human Rights Commission

Members present for start of the meeting: Power, Fenton, Walsh, and Carella. Also present were Assistant City Solicitor Liz Caiazzi and Pamela Johnson from the Law department. Members Whitley and Rossi were absent. Vice Chairman Carella motioned to adopt the minutes of the March 29, 2018. Walsh seconded. All Members present voted in the affirmative to adopt. Carella then moved to adopt the minutes from the April 26, 2018, meeting with CBC. Walsh seconded. All members present then voted in the affirmative to adopt.

The discussion then turned to the April 26, 2018, Meet & Greet with the Chelsea Black Community at the Library. The group was informed that the President of the CBC expressed her disappointment that the HRC, as constituted, could not do more. In particular, the President of the CBC expressed concerns about the concerns of her membership that hiring practices at City Hall disfavored non-Spanish speaking candidates. Power, who was absent from the CBC Meet & Greet, inquired about the tenor of the meeting; the group then discussed how the CBC had not before met to air their grievances relative to discrimination and that the meeting with the HRC, the first ever, functioned as that platform.

In that vein, and to better understand the distinction between the needs of the CBC and the Chelsea Collaborative, Carella compared the two groups and noted that while the former traditionally was not an advocacy group, the latter was in her opinion. Carella then noted that at least part of the corresponding difference, then, in reception of the HRC was that the CBC was hoping the HRC was an advocacy group. When the CBC learned that the HRC was simply an investigatory group functioning as a guidepost to either move parties toward mediation or onto some other adjudicatory body, it appeared to be a surprise to the CBC. Walsh pointed out that this was the goal of the Meet & Greets in the first place: to educate the community as to who the HRC was and as to what the HRC could do. Walsh suggested an ad in the newspaper to better publish the HRC mission; staff informed Walsh there was no budget for a newspaper advertisement but that the Mission Statement is on the City website. Walsh maintained that sometimes a mere inquiry from a body like the HRC was impactful in its own right.

Carella agreed, and felt that, for example, a letter requesting a breakdown by race of a body like the Chelsea Housing Authority would serve two purposes: to the extent they respond, the HRC would have documentary evidence to share at future Meet & Greets where housing discrimination is alleged AND the exercise itself would put the Housing Authority on notice that the HRC is truly present in the community. Power agreed, although cautioned that without knowing what the statistics will ultimately reveal, we may be reaching conclusions that surprise everyone. Fenton agreed that Meet & Greets are useful and should continue, and that gathering facts was also of benefit to the HRC.

In discussing next steps, the group agreed that

1. Meet & Greets would continue. The group asked staff to arrange a meeting with ROCA on June 12, 2018. They would also agree to meet with seniors at the Senior Center; Staff will solicit and circulate dates for same. The group will wait for now and decide later if meeting with the Rotary Club will happen. The primary goal of the Meet & Greets is to listen. On the occasion when speaking is necessary, the HRC's primary goal is to redirect the conversation to the mission of the group; the method for lodging a complaint; and the options for resolution which include mediation and referral to actual, adjudicatory bodies like the MCAD.
2. The group will authorize a letter to be sent by staff to CBC to inform them that, on a case by case basis, Human Resources, in filling positions going forward, will evaluate the necessity for including language in applications suggesting that Spanish-speaking applicants are preferred.
3. The group will authorize a letter to be sent by staff to the Chelsea Housing Authority seeking a breakdown, statistically, of various metrics used in the evaluation process to determine to whom affordable housing was being granted. Member Carella agreed to itemize a list of statistics the HRC will seek and then evaluate.

The group then turned to new business. Fenton asked if there was a new member yet; staff informed the group that a new appointee is pending.

Carella motioned to adjourn, Fenton seconded. All Members present voted in the affirmative and the meeting was adjourned.