



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.

Rev. Sandra G. Whitley,
DMin.

Roberto Rodriguez Lugo

Fatima Melara

Adopted
Minutes of the
November 6, 2018
Meeting of the
Chelsea Human Rights Commission

The meeting opened at 5:50 p.m. Members present at the start of the meeting were Susana Carella, Olivia Walsh, Mark Rossi and Fatima Melara, who was very recently appointed the HRC's newest member. Staff present were Assistant City Solicitor Liz Caiazzi and Pamela Johnson. Absent were Sandra Whitley and Amy Fenton and Roberto Lugo.

Rossi moved that the Minutes be adopted; Carella seconded the Motion. All members present voted in the affirmative to adopt the Minutes of the Chelsea Human Rights Commission Meeting of October 2, 2018. There were no votes in the negative.

New HRC member Fatima Melara was introduced and welcomed to the HRC.

Rossi asked for the staff report on pending HRC investigations. Caiazzi discussed a housing complaint involving sanitary code violations but as yet still developing facts concerning actual discrimination. Carella asked about involvement of municipal agencies in such cases; Rossi pointed out that the Inspectional Services Department should be notified; Caiazzi informed the Members that ISD in fact had been contacted in connection with the referral, explaining that some citizen complaints that may not make out a case of discrimination may nevertheless warrant attention and, in those cases, HRC staff is equipped to involve appropriate third parties.

Sandra Whitley joined the meeting, and the Members turned their attention to the Chelsea Housing Authority for the purpose of agreeing on a date to accept the Housing Authority's invitation to join them for a discussion about selection criteria and other topics of interest. Caiazzi advised that January 2 and January 16, 2019, were provided by the Housing Authority and solicited input from the membership regarding their availability. Members present agreed to January 16, 2019 for a meeting to take place at the Chelsea Housing Authority's Lock Street address. Rossi inquired as to whom would be leading the Authority's presentation; Caiazzi responded that it was her understanding that Diane Cohen or one of her designees would be available to answer questions and explain the data already provided to the Membership. Rossi inquired whether the Members would be given any documentation other than the documentation already provided by the Authority. Rossi suggested staff reach out to the Housing

Authority to obtain any internal policies or written procedures employed by the Authority in the selection of tenants given housing. While he acknowledged we are not involved in an actual lawsuit against the Authority, nor are there any formal complaints on file with staff to the HRC, he nevertheless thought it prudent that, prior to meeting, the members be supplied with as much information as possible. Furthermore, if the Authority was not inclined to provide its internal policies or procedures, then Rossi was inquiring what potential "next steps" in the process may be. Caiazzi informed the members that the City Solicitor would be consulted in this regard. Walsh discussed her experience with military personnel and with federal housing availability, as a means of demonstrating that numbers alone do not tell the whole story as to who gets selected for housing. Carella mentioned that she was not certain that the HRC would be given access to any internal documents especially in light of the fact that the Authority specifically suggested the in-person meeting so that the HRC would not be left with the wrong impression about how the Authority decides who gets housing from a very limited stock. Caiazzi indicated that she would discuss with City Solicitor options for obtaining records from the Authority, to the extent any were needed at this point as the HRC continues its "listening tour" by gathering information and speaking with various groups.

In the midst of this discussion, member Roberto Lugo joined the group and was introduced to new-member Melara. Carella provided a summary of the discussion for Lugo's benefit. Rossi called for any new business. Hearing none, Rossi moved to adjourn; Carella seconded. All present voted in the affirmative.