



DOMINICK PANGALLO
MAYOR

**CITY OF SALEM
RACE EQUITY COMMISSION**

98 WASHINGTON STREET
SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS 01970
978.745-9595 x. 41505

REGINA ZARAGOZA FREY, CHAIR
ALPHONSE WRIGHT, VICE CHAIR

**FINAL – Approved December 7, 2023
MINUTES OF THE RACE EQUITY COMMISSION
November 2, 2023**

A meeting of the Salem Race Equity Commission (REC) was held on November 2, 2023, at 5:30 pm via ZOOM, an online video conference call system in accordance with Chapter 107 of the Act of 2022.

1. Roll Call

Present on the call were: Regina Zaragoza Frey (Chair), Alphonse Wright (Vice Chair), Shantel Alix, Kenzie Chin, Paola Miranda, Alexandra Ramos, Tara Dhanraj Roden, Lisa Cammarata, and Salem Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Stephen Zrike.

Absent were: Rosa Alvarado, Nicole McLaughlin, Chief of Police Lucas Miller, and City Council Liaison Leveille McClain.

Other meeting attendees include: Robert Zarnetske (HCH Enterprises), Dr. Maritsa Barros (HCH Enterprises), Veronica Miranda, and Nathan Thomas from SATV.

2. Approve previous meeting minutes.

a. October 12, 2023

Chair Zaragoza entertained a motion to approve the previous meetings' minutes for October 12, 2023. Motion was made by Vice Chair Wright, seconded by Lisa Cammarata, and the motion was carried unanimously

3. Follow up discussion and vote regarding American Freedmen in Salem from October's meeting. Matter is expected to be continued at the December 2023 meeting because the City of Salem has not received the materials and literature requested for consideration.

Vice Chair Wright made a motion to table discussion and voting until all materials were received and given proper time to review, Shantel Alix seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.



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4. Equity Audit project update from ReadySet Solutions.

Chair Zaragoza said that ReadySet Solutions requested to give a more complete update in December so this item will be tabled until the December agenda.

5. Recruitment and Retention of a Diverse Workforce project update from HCH Enterprises.

Chair Zaragoza introduced HCH Enterprises representatives Robert Zarnetske and Dr. Maritsa Barros. Zarnetske provided a brief re-introduction of HCH Enterprises and their recent projects in other communities then turned it over to Dr. Barros.

Dr. Barros introduced herself and shared her experiences in diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEJI) including in higher education, municipal government, and research. Dr. Barros reminded the REC that the goal of this project is to recruit a more diverse workforce and create a more inclusive work environment which includes developing the skill sets of employees to better serve the community. The plan they are developing includes both short term goals and long term goals. The plan also looks at the role different positions and groups serve in these goals including the Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Human Resources, and the Race Equity Commission.

On December 7, HCH Enterprises will be sharing a final report that summarizes this project, goals, and suggested actions. Zarnetske shared the steps of the project and what the content of the report will include such as:

- Review and critique of the hiring process.
- Job descriptions from DEI perspective.
- Barriers and practices that exclude qualified applicants.
- Review city personnel policies and procedures.
- Strategies to increase recruitment from diverse and historically underrepresented communities.
- Strategies to recruit diverse candidates consistently and sustainably for all levels.
- Review the job interview process, identify concrete and specific measures, increase transparency.
- Identify recommendations for a more equitable interview process.
- Identify recommendations to ensure effective retention of a representative workforce.
- Create a plan to summarize the work, findings, and recommendations.
- Identify measures to hold stakeholders accountable.



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Zarnetske also shared the chapter headings of the content in the report:

- Sample Job Description Template
- Internal Policies and Procedures Review
- Recommendations and Best Practices - reduce implicit/unconscious bias
- Best Practices – Historically Underrepresented Communities
- Salem Census Data Comparison

Chair Zaragoza began a discussion about the role of REC in advising, implementing, and holding accountability for the content of the report.

Vice Chair Wright asked a clarifying question about if this includes the Fire Department or Police Department. Zarnetske confirmed that Fire and Police Departments will not be a primary focus in this project and report, however HCH Enterprises would be open to doing some review. Vice Chair Wright followed up by sharing that the Salem Police Department has expressed interest in recruiting a more diverse workforce and wanted to make a connection.

Chair Zaragoza notified the REC she needs to sign off the meeting early because she was requested to attend the City Council meeting. Chair signed off at 6:10 pm at which time Vice Chair Wright took over responsibility of leading the meeting.

Shantel Alix asked for clarity around the process for identifying best practices. Dr. Barros shared that many of the best practices come from her research and lived experiences. She also mentioned that many of these practices are so new and have not fully been implemented in enough situations to be labeled as “best practices.” Dr. Barros clarifies that they are better labeled as “emerging practices.” Zarnetske continued by sharing some concrete best practices that make a difference:

- That pathways and pipelines exist that lead people to these roles.
- Experiential opportunities to build comfort with the space and connection with the people such as having community members go to city hall.
- Make sure broad and intentional outreach is being done to share employment opportunities.

Kenzie Chin asked for clarity about how the implementation of the report’s recommendations will be measured. Zarnetske shared that they can include performance measures. Dr. Barros added that there will also be implementation of diversity scorecards.

Lisa Cammarata notified the REC she needs to sign off the meeting to handle some urgent matters that came up in her office and is not sure how long it will take. Before signing off,



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she expressed her excitement about this report and Human Resource's commitment to this work. Cammarata signed off at 6:15 pm.

Vice Chair Wright took a moment to reflect on the growth and direction of the work being done to move towards sincere diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice including how transparency and accountability will demonstrate serious commitment to this work.

Zarnetske emphasized the importance of the accountability and transparency components of this work, especially that it needs to be done in an appropriate way that doesn't cause harmful conflict. Zarnetske continued by asking about the culture of the City Hall including the taboos and the things that are cherished, both internally and externally from community members. Vice Chair Wright shared that Chair Zaragoza and Lisa Cammarata would have a better idea about the culture of City Hall.

Dr. Barros asked: As a member of this commission, what is your understanding of the city's goal around DEI and the ability of the REC to contribute to these goals? Tara Dhanraj Roden explained that the REC was developed based on a recommendation from the Race Equity Task Force's final report and the role of REC members is to help implement some of the goals included in that report. Tara was drawn to this commission as a BIPOC Salem resident who wanted to be part of a movement towards change in the city.

Superintendent Stephen Zrike shared that the Salem Public Schools have their own goals around diversity and equity goals. Superintendent Zrike shared there is not enough representation of diversity in the staff at the city level and in the schools. Many people point to diversity being one of Salem's greatest assets, but the city is not capitalizing on it enough in including everyone in the process and roles. He is hopeful that Salem Public School will work closely with the city as they do this work.

Vice Chair Wright shared that he was interested in this coalition because the siloing that exists in the city prevents true inclusion which would enrich the whole of the city. He wants to work to erode the silos and bring more equity, inclusion, and belonging into the diversity work being done.

Superintendent Zrike shared the need for more leadership of people of color on boards, as department heads, city council, and school committee. There are not a lot of people of color in rooms where decisions are being made. The room needs to reflect the community being served and that is not the case right now. Dr. Barros asked about any barriers or challenges to making that happen. Superintendent Zrike shared that many of the people who live in the area have lived here their whole lives so many of the people hiring are hiring people



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because they know them. There are many talented people of color, but they lack the credentials and there are barriers to achieve these credentials.

Kenzie Chin shared some limitations about this conversation and people's lack of participation. First, this is a public forum so people may not be comfortable sharing their view or experiences in this way and would rather a more private or anonymous setting. Second, many of the people on the commission do not work in city hall or have that knowledge to contribute. Third, the limits of the set up of the meeting such as Robert's Rules of Order can prevent productive work from being done. Chin shared it would be better for more people to work for the City to be able to do this work who don't have these same barriers. The strength of this commission is more for the accountability side. The work is already set up, but in this public forum setting they hold people accountable to the work.

Zarnetske validated Chin's comment about needing more people doing this work in City Hall versus relying on the commission and that will likely be a recommendation in the report. Dr. Barros shared concern about people who may not be clear about the role of this commission and ways to take real action towards it. They may explore organizing a focus group to have a similar conversation with the REC outside of the formal rules of a meeting.

Zarnetske and Dr. Barros expressed their gratitude to the REC and appreciated their contributions to the conversations. Vice Chair Wright expressed his gratitude to Zarnetske and Dr. Barros for their attendance at the meeting and their continued work.

6. Follow up discussion regarding Discrimination Reporting Form.

Vice Chair Wright provided an update that five reports have been received including some about physical accessibility, language accessibility, and criticism of the report. Chin questioned what the submissions criticizing the report said. Vice Chair Wright shared that the submission said the existence of this report is offensive. Chin asked if the other REC members are able to gain access to the report submissions. Vice Chair Wright recalled a discussion about sharing a quarterly report during REC meetings but deferred to Chair Zaragoza for confirmation. Currently the form goes to Chair Zaragoza, Vice Chair Wright, and Michael Corely in the Mayor's office. Chin agreed with an in depth quarterly report, but requested an update at every meeting about the quantity of submissions so discussions can be had about increasing use of the form.

Shantel Alix encouraged the development of an outreach plan to share this resource with the community. She also questioned the process and extent of the REC's role in reviewing



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and taking action in regard to the reporting form submissions. Vice Chair Wright shared that this is an informational tool so only in the case of a crime will they turn it over to the appropriate authorities. The information gathered in this report will be used to address concerns systematically as an intentional response and not a reaction to individual situations. Alix agreed with the purpose of the form, but wants to ensure this is being clearly communicated and finding ways to make this form accessible to the community.

Central message in outreach: we know there are issues. This is a tool to help us focus our attention on larger issues, not a tool to address individual problems. At a city level, this is how we have to do this.

Paola Miranda requested that after each submission, an email is sent confirming the receipt and sharing resources that might be helpful based on the situation. Vice Chair Wright and Tara developed the idea of including a list of resources to show on the final page that appears after submission as a way to direct users to take action or seek support. Vice Chair Wright added the importance of this being available in multiple languages.

Alix questioned if this form could be available in a paper copy. Vice Chair Wright shared that this came up in a different discussion with staff at City Hall. He said it could be possible but wondered how they would be utilized. Alix shared that there is a lack of access to the internet or navigation of resources within the community. She shared that creating more avenues for submitting this form including having paper forms available in accessible places including at North Shore Community Development Coalition. Vice Chair Wright suggested adding this to New Business for further discussion at the next meeting.

7. New business.

- a. Ways to make the Discrimination Reporting Form more accessible.

Vice Chair Wright initiated a discussion about ways to make the Discrimination Reporting Form more accessible including an outreach plan about the digital option and making paper forms available in strategic locations. Alix shared that the best way to do this is to utilize a variety of different strategies and to partner with community organizations that already have capacity and connections to the community. Alix encouraged the REC to approach this as a partnership and compromise with the community organizations and make clear how they will be helping each other by distributing this form.



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Kenzie Chin agreed with Alix's idea to start a shared google document that members can add potential partners and collaborators too. She also agreed with the idea of having a paper copy available in other locations. She acknowledged that the email from the Mayor's office reached a lot of people and believes it would be helpful to have another message sent about it for repeated exposure.

Vice Chair Wright stated that this item will be added to the agenda for the next meeting to continue the discussion.

- b. Kenzie Chin began a discussion about the Veteran's parking discussion that the REC has had at previous meetings. She learned that many other cities have informal Veteran's stickers that residents can go to City Hall, show identification, and then receive. Vice Chair Wright shared that this idea is already being discussed.

8. Public Comment.

Vice Chair Wright made a call for public comment. There was no public comment.

9. Adjournment.

Motion to adjourn was made by Vice Chair Wright, seconded by Tara Dhanraj Roden, and the motion was carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:17 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Samantha Giffen
Race Equity Commission Minute Taker