



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
MINUTES OF THE RACE EQUITY COMMISSION
March 7, 2024**

A meeting of the Salem Race Equity Commission (REC) was held on March 7, 2024, 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), Rosa Alvarado, Tara Dhanraj Roden, Alexandra Ramos, Kenzie Chin, and City of Salem Human Resources Director Lisa Cammarata.

Absent were: Shantel Alix, Nicole McLaughlin, Paola Miranda, Chief of Police Lucas Miller, Salem Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Stephen Zrike, and City Council Liaison Jeff Cohen.

Other meeting attendees include: Nathan Thomas (SATV)

2. Approve previous meeting minutes.

a. February 1, 2024

Chair Zaragoza entertained a motion to approve the previous meetings' minutes for February 1, 2024. Motion was made by Lisa Cammarata, seconded by Tara Dhanraj Roden, and the motion was carried unanimously

3. Follow up discussion regarding February's meeting regarding the creation of an American Freedmen Commission in the City of Salem, continued from February's agenda.

Chair Zaragoza explained that this item was discussed briefly at the last meeting and REC members voted to table it until this meeting. She shared that based on the discussion from the last meeting, it seemed like REC members wanted to table this indefinitely until they received more information or a member wanted to bring it back up for discussion. Vice Chair Wright recused himself from the discussion and the vote.



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Kenzie Chin made a motion to table the discussion indefinitely or until there is more information to be presented about it, Tara Dhanraj Roden seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously in a roll call vote.

Lisa Cammarata	Y
Rosa Alvarado	Y
Alexandra Ramos	Y
Tara Dhanraj Roden	Y
Kenzie Chin	Y
Vice Chair Wright	Abstained

4. Summary and overview of reports on the City's Discrimination Reporting Form since its launch. Discuss potential recommendations.

Chair Zaragoza prefaced this item by explaining that she can't be too specific with the details since it is a public forum. There have been 9 reports submitted since it launched in December. It seems like not many people in the community know about this form despite efforts to get the word out. This is a really helpful resource for the community, useful to have on the website, and will begin to be used more as it becomes more well known.

Chair Zaragoza shared the following summary of the submitted reports:

- 2 are related to disabilities.
- 3 are related to Salem businesses.
- 3 may be categorized as other, or not relevant to discrimination. Vice Chair Wright agreed that these do not fall under the purview of discrimination and clarified that two of these three are actually from the same person about the same issue.
- 1 is related to language bias.

Chair Zaragoza received permission to share the language bias report publicly to provide an example. This report was made by Alyssa Rose Martin on October 28. It was as follows:

At roughly 10am on Saturday I observed a language bias incident at a business. The drive thru register was broken and the employees had put a sign in English on the glass window that read "Drive Thru Closed" to encourage customers to come inside. While I was inside waiting for a flu shot, I observed a car come up to the drive thru window. The employees inside said, in English, that the drive thru was closed and asked the customer to come inside. After the car pulled away, the female



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employee said, in frustration, “could the sign be any larger?” And the male employee responded, also with frustration, “or, you know, learn English.”

Vice Chair Wright appreciates that average residents are filing these reports about discrimination that they see and not necessarily just the people that the discrimination was perpetrated against. He agreed that it is a great tool and we just need to get the word out there. This will give a much broader picture of the types and frequency of discrimination in Salem.

Kenzie Chin asked if there is a way for the members of the REC to be able to gain access to view these reports. Chair Zaragoza said that she will check with the City Solicitor, and if okay, she will forward reports to REC members. Otherwise they may need to go through the process for a formal public records request

Lisa Cammarata asked if the form says that submissions are confidential. Chair Zaragoza said that it does not say this on the form, but she believes the details shouldn't be discussed in a public meeting. However, the form does say that these are subject to public record requests.

Cammarata brought up the idea of a smaller group of REC members coming together to continuously review the reports and develop actions the REC can take to address some of the common types of discrimination being reported through the form. Examples of actions may include sharing information to make people aware of the issue, reaching out to relevant businesses, or sharing resources with the community.

Vice Chair Wright brought up a concern that even sharing the report submissions via email to the whole group is subject to the Open Meeting Law. He agreed with Cammarata's idea of having a smaller group work on it that is not quorum of REC so it is not subject to Open Meeting Law.

Chair Zaragoza agreed that she will find out if she can simply forward the reports either individually or as a group so REC members can read them. She will also look into if REC should discuss the reports during meetings and how much details can be publicly discussed.

Kenzie Chin brought up the option of REC members getting the login information for the platform to access the reports. Chair Zaragoza explained that there is not a platform to log into, there is just an email sent to designated people with the information. She agreed to look into whether all REC members could be sent an email automatically every time a report is submitted as well.



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Vice Chair Wright agreed that these reports should automatically be sent to all REC members and that this process may bypass the Open Meeting Law.

Kenzie Chin emphasized the importance of REC members being able to access the reports so they can individually notice patterns. There should not be specific information discussed, but maybe they can take broad actions.

5. Discussion regarding next projects for the Race Equity Commission and discussion regarding the Race Equity Task Force Report.

Chair Zaragoza prefaced this discussion by sharing that Tara Dhanraj Roden brought this up at a past meeting. The purpose of this discussion will be to review the Race Equity Task Force Report and see if there are any projects the REC would like to take on.

Tara Dhanraj Roden requested an update of which recommendations the City has already been working on. Out of all the recommendations, she wants to understand what has been addressed so far, what is still in progress, and what is still open. Dhanraj Roden recognized that many recommendations were in relation to public safety and the school system. With the Chief of Police Lucas Miller and Salem Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Stephen Zrike being on the REC, this is an opportunity for collaboration and identifying ways to support them in this work.

Chair Zaragoza agreed that these are all great points and having these positions serve on the REC was intentional so the work would continue. She shared that we can wait until a later meeting when Chief Miller and Superintendent Zrike are in attendance to continue this discussion of the work in these areas. Chair Zaragoza shared that there has been progress made for many of the items in the Race Equity Task Force Report. For example, on page 16, one of the big concerns of the education subcommittee was diversifying their faculty and staff as well as embedding diversity into the curriculum. Chair Zaragoza said that the schools have been investing a lot of time and money into making this a reality for a lot of reasons. There was also a recommendation about a culture fest from the cultural subcommittee. While there are currently no plans, there is a lot of dialogue around it especially as we approach Salem 400+.

Alexandra Ramos was interested in learning more from Superintendent Zrike about the initiative for diversifying faculty and staff in the schools. She has not heard much about this with Salem Academy Charter School and is interested in bringing this work there.



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Tara Dhanraj Roden shared that she is interested in some of the public safety work and would love to learn more from Chief Miller. She is specifically interested in learning about some of the training he has implemented, if any, and how REC members can have a say in them. She is also interested in the development of a Citizen Oversight group which might be good for REC to support them with. REC can help them think about what this could look like and where it could sit within the City.

Chair Zaragoza thought these were really good points and will plan to have Chief Miller and Superintendent Zrike discuss how their areas have been addressing the relevant items in the Race Equity Task Force Report. Chair Zaragoza hopes to have Chief Miller speak specifically about his thoughts around a Citizen Oversight group and the role the REC can play in this.

Tara Dhanraj Roden brought up another recommendation about local businesses, organizations, and community centers hosting trainings and events related to race equity for the City. She thinks it might be helpful for REC to try learning about what local businesses exist that are doing work in this space and how REC can support them. There was some confusion among members about which item Dhanraj Roden was referencing. She identified the item on page 8, the second bullet:

“We call on local businesses, organizations, schools, and community centers to host/sponsor a program (lecture, film, discussion, book reading, or training) that attends to the aims of this Task Force. Examples include: hosting an unconscious bias workshop; screening a documentary or film related to the civil rights movement; holding a conversation between historians and activists to learn from the past and guide our future; offering a program in Spanish; reading and discussing a book about black or brown history; etc.”

Vice Chair Wright is also interested in this initiative and thinks it would be interesting to engage the Chamber of Commerce in this. They may have an idea about which businesses or programs are already doing some of this work, such as the Salem Film Fest which hosts BIPOC producers and stories.

Chair Zaragoza does feel like this has happened organically in many ways, but not necessarily anything led by the city. For example the House of Seven Gables has hosted a lot of events about reducing systemic bias, addressing immigration issues, and people having a sense of belonging. Also, Shawn Newton, who led the Race Equity Task Force and works at Salem State University, has led unconscious bias workshops. Chair Zaragoza agreed there is more to do.



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Kenzie Chin shared she is excited about this conversation. Maybe a first step is to have the REC help track and amplify community events that are fulfilling this initiative. This could be a flyer or one-pager on the website. Then, just like with the discrimination form, REC members can notice any gaps and identify ways to fill them.

Chair Zaragoza asked if anyone knows about the North Shore Alliance for Economic Development. No one seemed familiar with them. She continued to share that they have a diversity directory of businesses in the North Shore, including specifically in Salem. All the Mayors sit on this board. She said this can be a helpful tool for what Chin was talking about doing. Chair Zaragoza shared her screen to show their website homepage and their diversity directory. She showed an example of how you can filter by city/town, diversity designation, and type of business. She shared that this is something that can be advertised more and utilized more.

Chin agrees that this falls into the category of identifying initiatives, events, or organizations that already exist and promoting them. This website is really helpful with being able to promote certain businesses and organizations. However, she is unsure about if something like this currently exists for events. Chair Zaragoza explained that event lists do exist already, but it is difficult because they are not all in one place. Another large challenge she identified is how does the REC effectively collect and disseminate this information.

Vice Chair Wright shared that this is an ongoing issue with the Human Rights Coalition (HRC) when trying to identify programs they can promote. There are members of the HRC currently compiling this information with plans to then share it in a concise way. He volunteered to compile this on a monthly basis from the variety of organizations across Salem.

Chair Zaragoza shared that this is something that would be really great to share as a public calendar on the City of Salem website. Vice Chair Wright added that this would also help the organizations whose events are being listed.

Chair Zaragoza summarized the items discussed:

1. Hear from Chief Miller and Superintendent Zrike about the progress happening in their areas.
2. Have a discussion about the Civilian Oversight board and see the role REC could play in it.



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3. Kenzie Chin added that the REC's request for Chief Miller Superintendent Zrike is done in a way that recognizes the great work they are already doing and if there is a way the REC can support this work.

Chair Zaragoza shared that she has done a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) training for everyone in the City of Salem including the Police Department. Chief Miller has already said that he is committed to having Chair Zaragoza do an annual training for the Police Department on a DEI related topic. Chair Zaragoza shared that she really appreciated this conversation and thanked Tara for initiating it.

6. New business.

Vice Chair Wright requested an update about the Equity Audit from ReadySet Solutions and the Recruitment and Retention of a Diverse Workforce project with HCH Enterprises. He also asked when the findings of these will be available to the public. Chair Zaragoza shared that the Diverse Workforce report is finalized. It is intended to be internal because it is an overview of HR practices, however if any of the REC members are interested in seeing it, she will share it with them. The City will be going through a different consultant for the recruitment and retention practices of a diverse workforce for the police and fire departments. The City of Salem is currently requesting quotes from other consultants to do this review. The goal is for this review to happen over the summer with a deadline of October to report to the state what the City did with the grant funds awarded to do this project.

Lisa Cammarata agreed that the City will be going with a different consultant for the project with the police and fire departments because they were disappointed with the report they received for the City's Recruitment and Retention of a Diverse Workforce project.

Regarding the Equity Audit, Chair Zaragoza said it is going really well. ReadySet Solutions is scheduled to be in Salem physically in April to do the community assessment. This will consist of hosting focus groups, attending meetings, visiting masses and events as recommended by the community, and hosting meetings with other City groups and leaders. At the next REC meeting, Chair Zaragoza will plan to share an update about this. ReadySet Solutions will also be coming to later REC meetings to share updates as required by their contract. This will be to collect a final round of feedback and to present the report.

Regarding an opportunity for public comment, Lisa Cammarata noted that there were no additional meeting attendees to share a public comment. Chair Zaragoza moved forward to the next agenda item of adjourning the meeting.



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7. 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 6:38 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Samantha Giffen
Race Equity Commission Minute Taker