



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 January 4, 2024  
MINUTES OF THE RACE EQUITY COMMISSION  
December 7, 2023**

A meeting of the Salem Race Equity Commission (REC) was held on December 7, 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), Rosa Alvarado, Nicole McLaughlin, Paola Miranda, Kenzie Chin, Alexandra Ramos, Tara Dhanraj Roden, Lisa Cammarata, Chief of Police Lucas Miller, and Salem Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Stephen Zrike.

Absent were: Shantel Alix and City Council Liaison Leveille McClain.

Other meeting attendees include: Meghna Majmudar (ReadySet), Viveka Kymal (ReadySet), Robert Zarnetske (HCH Enterprises), Dr. Maritsa Barros (HCH Enterprises) and Nathan Thomas from SATV.

**2. Approve previous meeting minutes.**

a. November 2, 2023

Chair Zaragoza entertained a motion to approve the previous meetings' minutes for November 2, 2023. Motion was made by Nicole McLaughlin, seconded by Tara Dhanraj Roden, and the motion was carried unanimously

**3. Robert's Rules and Public Meeting Law discussion and clarification as it pertains to our conversations of the Race Equity Commission.**

Chair Zaragoza acknowledged that Robert's Rules and the Public Meeting Law were discussed at the previous meeting with REC members saying they found them to be barriers to fully participating in some discussions. Chair Zaragoza and Lisa Cammarata shared some clarifications to help REC members and the public better understand these rules and how to navigate them.



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Lisa Cammarata clarified that the agenda items must be clear so all REC members and the public can understand what topics will be discussed at each meeting. If something is on the agenda, then anything related to it can be discussed or voted on. Cammarata referenced her experience working with the Disability Commission and recommended maybe adding “Open Discussion” as an agenda item every week as an opportunity for announcements and discussion about future meeting agenda items.

Chair Zaragoza recommended that if any REC members have any remaining questions, reach out to her or Cammarata.

#### **4. Equity Audit project update from ReadySet Solutions.**

Chair Zaragoza introduced this topic by providing some context and framework for the discussion. The Equity Audit is being done with funding received by the state through the Community Compact Grant. With the Mayor, the funding was raised from \$40,000 to \$80,000 to do a more comprehensive and high quality audit. Equity Audits are initiatives being done by many municipalities and it looks very different in each place. The City of Salem’s Equity Audit is external so it looks at how the community feels about government processes that affect them. Specifically, it is looking at a few key areas that the representatives from ReadySet Solutions will be discussing. As external constituents, it is valuable to get input and feedback from REC members.

Chair Zaragoza clarified that the Equity Audit with ReadySet Solutions is focused on external processes, while the Recruitment and Retention of a Diverse Workforce project with HCH Enterprises is focused on internal policies and procedures.

Chair Zaragoza turns it over to Meghna Majmudar and Viveka Kymal from ReadySet. Majmudar and Kymal introduce themselves including their areas of expertise, relevant prior work experiences, and their role in the City of Salem’s Equity Audit.

Kymal introduces ReadySet as a high-touch boutique consulting firm specializing in making more human-centric, equitable, diverse, and inclusive organizations and work environments. Their mission is to change the way the world works. Their work focuses on five areas: organizational assessments, DEI strategy & community engagement, workshop design & facilitation, scalable e-learning, and leadership, training, coaching, & communications. Kymal said they focus on actually acting on findings and measuring progress. ReadySet Solutions has worked with over 300 organizations including a plethora of government entities, non-profit organizations, advocacy & trade organizations, and hospitals, research, & academic institutions. Kymal said they prioritize impact and



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meaningful change in the work being done. They do this by being: tailored & comprehensive, intersectional & holistic, data driven, and regionally & culturally specific. ReadySet Solutions's values include: integrity, empathy, creativity, growth, and enthusiasm.

Majmudar shared that ReadySet Solutions's work with Salem includes four goals:

1. Conduct **community assessment** identifying current experience of equity and inclusion.
2. Evaluate City **planning and procurement processes** to increase community involvement.
3. Clarify an action plan to increase diversity and representation on **City Boards, Commissions, and Committees**.
4. Improve **language justice** and translation processes for more inclusive community engagement

Majmudar said they are currently in the information gathering stage and shared some emerging thoughts about each of these goals.

### a. Language Justice

Majmudar said that language justice is not something that can flip overnight so their project team developed a maturity model that provides a framework for the progress of Salem's work on language justice. The maturity model includes five phases: Compliance, reactive, proactive, best practice, and innovative. Based on their understanding, Salem is currently in the reactive phase moving towards proactive. This model is based on written policies as well as practical access to participation. This framework helps identify where Salem currently is and provides action steps to work towards the last step of the framework.

Chair Zaragoza added that Salem Public Schools is also pursuing work related to language justice and is actually ahead of the City of Salem on this. Chair Zaragoza believes this is the biggest area for the City to improve upon and is currently working on a Spanish translation and interpretation policy.

Nicole McLaughlin pointed out one of the items on the slideshow that says "both simultaneous and consecutive interpretation is offered in select meetings." She asked a clarifying question about when both would be used at the same time or when it might be best to only use consecutive. Majmudar shared that simultaneous interpretation requires the purchase of special equipment that can be expensive. Kymal clarified that the bullet is stating that both are being offered, not necessarily at the same time. Chair Zaragoza



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provided the example of City Council meetings currently not being translated. They are hoping to start with translation to Spanish, but hope to expand to other languages based on the languages being used in our community.

### **b. Planning and Procurement Processes**

Majmudar shared that there is a plan to do more data collection for this area in the new year, but continued to share some initial emerging thoughts and insights. Projects within the Planning Department have inconsistent community engagement levels. Right now, community members engage if they can, such as if they have time, but sometimes there can still be misaligned expectations about the conversation and how to effectively participate. Majmudar continued to share that they found there are no clear information channels with the community, so community members don't know where and how they can have a meaningful impact.

In terms of procurement and purchasing, Majmudar shared that there is a really solid framework to base this work on. Some initial questions they plan to explore are how many contracts are at each level and are there departmental trends for size of contracts. For smaller contracts (less than \$10,000), there may be ways to get these opportunities out in front of people such as partnering with the Chamber of Commerce. In some circumstances, people feel more comfortable with who they know and may not think to bring in new people for the opportunity so it is important to find that balance. For larger contracts, there may be ways to do this more intentionally such as tracking which are subcontracted out or adding diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) criteria.

Lisa Cammarata asked a clarifying question about Majmudar identifying there not being any clear information channels with the community. Majmudar clarified that through the data collection phase they are in, they've posed the question to community members about if this exists and many people did not know of where to go for this. Majmudar asked that if there is more information about this, then please share.

Cammarata explained some of the steps the City has taken to make meetings and participation in them more accessible. She hopes that recommendations are shared on how to better promote these opportunities to community members.

Majmudar and Kymal confirmed they are still getting information and collecting community feedback. Kymal added that there is good work being done in Salem to increase accessibility, but they will be trying to figure out what the visibility gap may be with some of this work.



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### **c. City Boards, Commissions, and Committees**

Majmudar shared that right now, as a member of the general public, it is difficult to understand which Boards and Commissions are the most influential and how to take part - let alone become a member. Additionally, some Boards and Commissions are appointed, others chosen by the Mayor, and others open. Similarly, some are paid and others are not and the reasoning needs to be clarified. Majmudar shared an initial recommendation of creating visual categorization of Boards and Commissions that identify Decision-Making Boards and Advisory Boards as well as the requisites to be a member. Some key questions that will continue to be explored are:

- When a need for representation is identified, what is a way to address this (e.g. No representation of Renters on Housing Commission)?
- What communications exist around open roles and seeking Community representation?
- What might be barriers to access for people looking to participate in City government Boards and Commissions?

### **d. Projected 2024 Timeline**

Majmudar and Kyma shared the projected timeline for 2024 including:

January and February → Community Engagement Planning  
March and April → Community Engagement Survey/Interviews  
May and June → Report Development  
July → Presentation of Report  
July and August → DEI Activation and Strategy  
Ongoing project management and advisory throughout.

Nicole McLaughlin thanked Majmudar and Kymal for the insights on what has been done and what is being explored moving forward. This is great information to have as a Commission member.

Majmudar shared that they will likely see more communication from them as they continue to reach out to the community to collect information and feedback.

Chair Zaragoza added that the ReadySet Solutions team has already begun conducting interviews and REC members may be reached out to. ReadySet will come to future meetings for feedback and to present the report. REC has been identified as the public body to provide feedback on this process.



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

- a. Presentation of the final Plan for the City of Salem.**
- b. Continuing work with the Police and Fire Departments in the City of Salem**

Chair Zaragoza introduced HCH Enterprises representatives Robert Zarnetske and Dr. Maritsa Barros to present their final report. Chair Zaragoza and Lisa Cammarata worked very closely with them on this since their work was essentially an audit of Human Resources with a DEI lens. HCH Enterprises and the City are exploring the possibility that they will continue this work with the City of Salem's Police & Fire Departments.

Zarnetske shared that the focus of their work has been on recruitment, diverse and historically underrepresented communities, barriers, and policies and procedures. Dr. Barros shared a snapshot that out of 26 management-level staff, only 2 identify as people of color and out of those at the Senior Staff level, none identify as people of color. This snapshot looks at this from a numbers perspective, but they also acknowledge that the diversity people bring goes beyond race.

Throughout this project, they looked at a variety of policies and procedures, both written and unwritten. They shared the models they chose to utilize in their recommendations. They also identified peer cities that Salem is in a similar place to with this work including Tacoma, WA; Palm Springs, CA; and El Cerrito, CA.

Dr. Barros and Zarnetske presented the following recommendations which will be included in the final report:

- Job Descriptions:
  - Description of workplace culture at the top.
  - Include minimum requirements then preferred requirements because many skills can be learned on the job and are not actually required.
  - Adding the following statement to the bottom of each job posting: "The City of Salem is dedicated to fostering, cultivating, and preserving a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Recognizing the unique contributions of all its employees and citizens, the City values and celebrates the diversity within its community, enhancing the character and quality of life in Salem. In the interest of best serving all residents, the City's government is committed to promoting, respecting, and accommodating diversity throughout its workforce in order to better reflect the diversity of our city."
- Website Navigation and Visibility: Efforts should be directed towards optimizing the search engine performance of the website. A strategic enhancement in keyword



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searches, particularly for “Salem, MA,” should ensure that salemma.gov features prominently in top results.

- Accessibility: Enhance the visibility of information regarding accommodations on the job application webpage. This could include clear instructions on how to request accommodations and assurance that such requests will not negatively impact the applicant’s chances.
- Enhanced Outreach to Underrepresented Groups: Despite existing efforts like publications in Spanish-speaking newspapers and online outreach, there’s a need for more effective strategies to attract candidates from traditionally underrepresented or marginalized groups. Examples include creating and expanding pathways for younger people through engagements with high school and colleges.
- Training and Support: Deliver comprehensive training and support to departmental leaders and staff, ensuring the minimization of implicit bias as well as the adept utilization of Diversity Advocates. There should be more focus on doing this as professional development; it doesn’t always have to look like attending a training and checking it off the list.
- Implementation of Diversity Advocates:
  - A Diversity and Inclusion Advocate (“Diversity Advocate”) is a trained search committee member or two who promotes efforts to improve equity, diversity, and inclusivity within valid, evidentiary-based searches and hiring processes.
  - All members of a search committee will be provided training by the Diversity Advocate before conducting job interviews. The training will center on culture and ethnic norms and expectations.
  - Likeability is often a powerful dynamic in job interviews.
- Inclusion Metrics: Establish a tracking system for diversity and inclusion metrics, such as the demographic makeup of applicant pools, interviewees, and hires, to ensure the workforce reflects the city’s demographics.
- Implementation of Diversity Scorecards:
  - Diversity scorecards serve as comprehensive tools designed to assess, monitor, and enhance diversity and inclusion initiatives within an organization.
  - The introduction of these scorecards is pivotal in aligning departmental and divisional initiatives with the overarching diversity goals of the city, fostering accountability, and promoting a more inclusive workforce.
- Feedback Mechanisms: Implement a structured feedback mechanism for all applicants, including those not selected, to gather insights on their application experience, with a focus on accessibility and inclusivity.



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- Elevate, Define, & Empower the DEI Director Role
  - Designating the Director as a Member of the Senior Leadership Team will:
    - Send internal and external signals about the importance of inclusion.
    - Ensures that DEI concepts are integrated into decision-making and planning.
    - Provide the DEI Director with a voice among top city officials.
    - Encourage a uniform DEI approach across all departments.
    - Facilitate citywide DEI training and resources.
    - Facilitate monitoring and measurement of progress toward the city's goals.
  - Making the difference between inclusion being a theoretical aspiration and it becoming a practical core administrative function.

Zarnetske shared that the City of Salem is already doing this work really well and has implemented a lot of the recommendations that would be given to other communities.

Vice Chair Wright uplifted their recommendations to build pathways that focus on exposure to the City's opportunities and to elevate the DEI Director to Senior Leadership.

Lisa Cammarata questioned if the REC members will be receiving the report. Chair Zaragoza stated that the report has been sent to REC members and the presentation from this meeting can also be shared. Cammarata said that this can be added as an agenda item to the next meeting so REC members can give feedback or ask any remaining questions.

Chair Zaragoza reminded that one of the purposes of the REC, based on the ordinance, is "Designing and conducting hiring and recruitment programs and advising on employee training and retention programs to increase diversity and cultural competency of city staff."

Zarnetske and Dr. Barros thanked the REC for being part of this process. Chair Zaragoza appreciated working with Zarnetske and Dr. Barros over the past few months and looks forward to the work they will continue to do with the Police and Fire Department.

### 6. New business.

Chair Zaragoza said that she will add an agenda item to the next meeting to discuss the Recruitment and Retention of a Diverse Workforce Report from HCH Enterprises that was just presented on by Zarnetske and Dr. Barros.

### 7. Public Comment.



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Chair Zaragoza made a call for public comment. There was no public comment.

**8. Adjournment.**

Motion to adjourn was made by Vice Chair Wright, seconded by Dr. Stephen Zrike, and the motion was carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:24 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Samantha Giffen  
Race Equity Commission Minute Taker