



DOMINICK PANGALLO
MAYOR

**CITY OF SALEM
RACE EQUITY COMMISSION**

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

REGINA ZARAGOZA FREY, CHAIR
SHELBY ORTEGA, VICE CHAIR

**MINUTES OF THE RACE EQUITY COMMISSION
September 3, 2026**

A meeting of the Salem Race Equity Commission (REC) was held on September 3, 2026, at 5:00 pm via Zoom, an online video conference call system in accordance with Chapter 2 of the Act of 2025. Pursuant to Section 30A of chapter 20 of the acts of 2021, as amended by 2 section 40 of chapter 2 of the acts of 2023, and further amended by Section 1 of Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2025, the City is authorized to conduct remote meetings of its public bodies through June 30, 2027.

1. Roll Call

Present on the call were: Regina Zaragoza Frey (Chair), Dr. Shelby Ortega (Vice Chair), Dr. Vanita Naidoo, Dr. Javier Garcia-Perez, Jennifer Winsor, Human Resources Director Lisa Cammarata, Chief of Police Lucas Miller, and City Council Liaison Kyle Davis

Absent were: Rosa Alvarado, Alexandra Ramos, Dr. Melanie Sonsteng-Person, and Salem Public Schools Superintendent Tommy Welch

2. Approve previous meeting minutes.

a. July 16, 2026

VOTE: Motion to approve the meeting minutes for July 16, 2026 was made by Lisa Cammarata, seconded by Jennifer Winsor, and the motion was carried unanimously.

3. Public Comment.

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

4. Announcements and Updates



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The next Race Equity Commission meeting falls on October 1 which is the night of the Haunted Happenings Parade so this meeting was rescheduled to Wednesday, September 30 at 5:00 pm.

5. Presentation and discussion from Salem State University's Senior Associate Vice President and Dean of Students, Shawn A. Newton.

- a. History of the creation of the Race Equity Commission, 2020-2021 Race Equity Task Force work, the creation of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion role within the City of Salem and perspectives on where race equity work should go.**

Chair Zaragoza introduced this topic by explaining that the Race Equity Task Force developed the [Race Equity Task Force Report](#) with recommendations including the creation of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Director position and the Race Equity Commission. She reported that most of the recommendations have been implemented or progress has been made on them.

Shawn Newton introduced himself, his background in higher education, and his prior work with the City of Salem including chairing the No Place for Hate Committee and the Race Equity Task Force.

He discussed the importance of defining the word "racism" at the beginning of the work of the Race Equity Task Force to ensure everyone was on the same page before diving into the work. Next, the focus was on what the issues facing the City of Salem were and how the committee can tackle them. The Task Force split into sub-groups which ended up informing each of the recommendations listed within the final report. There were then public meetings to discuss these topics and suggested recommendations.

He expressed appreciation for the progress that has been made in achieving these recommendations laid out in the report. The City of Salem was one of the first municipalities to establish a task force and publish a report like this.

Chair Zaragoza asked Shawn's thoughts on how this work related to diversity, equity, and inclusion has changed due to the change of the federal landscape. Shawn responded by emphasizing the need for people to be more strategic in how they do this work and standing strong in these values. This will continue to be challenging to navigate.



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Jennifer Winsor and Dr. Shelby Ortega asked for Shawn's input on where the Race Equity Commission should focus their energy based on the work of the Race Equity Task Force and the final report. Shawn explained that the committee should pick one recommendation and really lean into them one at a time. He thinks that everyone on a commission like REC should feel like they've made a difference by the time their term has ended. The Mayor and City Council are relying on recommendations from REC for actions to take and initiatives to prioritize. Nothing should be off the table and everything is possible.

6. Discussion: City Seal - Task Force recommendation, pending Council vote, and citizen petition to place the question on the ballot.

Chair Zaragoza summarized the history of the initiative to change the City Seal. A City Seal Task Force was established and voted in favor to change the City Seal. After that, a City Council Committee considered the topic and voted in favor to change the City Seal. Next, it will go to the full City Council to vote during their next meeting on Thursday, September 10. REC members appreciated the summary and did not have any additional questions or topics to discuss.

7. Follow up on changes to the Discrimination Reporting Form. **a. Update from Solicitor's office regarding changes to the form.**

Chair Zaragoza shared that there are now concerns about this form posing liability concerns for the City of Salem and their role in responding to submissions that has not been planned for. She met with Assistant City Solicitor Omar Bennani and shared examples from Cambridge and Arlington that have similar forms.

- [Cambridge File a Discrimination Complaint](#)
- [Arlington Human Rights Commission Report an Incident](#)

Bennani is going to do some research by reaching out to these communities to see how they monitor and respond to the forms. Chair Zaragoza recommended REC pause working on changes to Salem's form until this additional research has concluded.

Dr. Shelby Ortega brought up concerns about capacity and resources for the City of Salem compared to Cambridge and Arlington when monitoring and responding to form submissions. She also brought up the potential for conducting research to pilot the form if the group keeps being met by red tape. The process of setting up this research would require



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going through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) which could provide a thorough review of the concerns with the form.

Lisa Cammarata suggested adding information about filing discrimination complaints with [Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination \(MCAD\)](#) to the City of Salem website in lieu of the City of Salem discrimination form, at least in the meantime.

Dr. Vanita Naidoo shared appreciation for all of the work on this form and agreed that it makes sense for the next step to be focused on information gathering. Chair Zaragoza closed the conversation by confirming information gathering will be taking place and she will bring this back up in the new year with additional guidance.

8. New Business.

- a. October - Hate crime and bias incident update/report by Salem Police Department**
- b. Invite leaders of the immigrant community to share feedback, concerns, and establish ongoing communication with the Race Equity Commission.**

During the October meeting, REC will hear from a local business owner who would like to discuss the development of a memorial.

Jennifer Winsor requested we add discussion about revisiting the Race Equity Task Force Report and deciding where the REC should focus their energy.

No additional new business was presented.

9. Adjournment.

VOTE: Motion to adjourn was made by Jennifer Winsor, seconded by Dr. Shelby Ortega, and the motion was approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 6:28 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Samantha Giffen
Race Equity Commission Clerk