

THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 14, 2015 MEETING

Commissioners Present—Sona Petrossian, Jane Brown, Sheila Mondshein, Hattie Kerwin Derrick, Holly Ryan, Peter Brown and Dianne Chilingirian

Commissioners Not Present - Nazik Kazimi, Brenda Krasnow

Advisory Council Present—Viviana Planine. Lt Bruce Apotheke and Frank Wolpe

Student Representatives Present— None

Guests – Betty Chan

Staff to the Commission – Linda Walsh

The meeting was called to order by Peter Brown, Chair, at 7:40 p.m. in room 222 in Newton City Hall. There was no public comment.

Due to exams, there were no students at the meeting.

Lt. Apotheke reported that there were no hate crimes to report.

The group discussed the December 2014 awards program. The consensus was that giving the adult/community recipient(s) an engraved plaque was better than merely giving them a printed certificate. Everyone thought that starting the program at 6:30 pm with a reception and then proceeding to the awards program at 7:00 pm worked very well. It gave people a chance to mingle and the program started on time with everyone present. No one had a problem with the Commission presenting the adult/community award to more than one recipient, though the feeling was that it was preferred that recipients be honored for accomplishments primarily in the Newton community rather than elsewhere. The library seems to be a good venue even if we have to be out of the building by 9:00 pm. With respect to publicity, it was noted that there was no mention of the program in the city activities column on the second page of the TAB. After the program The TAB published Diane's article about the program, verbatim.

Betty Chan of the Newton Asian Pacific American Network described planned activities to celebrate Asian History in May. She asked if the HRC would co-sponsor the program. Jane made a motion that the Commission co-sponsor the May program. Diane seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. It was noted that if the Commission was to fund part of the activities, a budget should be presented and a vote then taken to provide funds.

Sheila advised that based upon several years' experience in using the Commission's Rules of Procedure for Complaints of Housing Discrimination, several revisions to the rules should be made. All the changes are to Sections 3 and 4 of the Rules. The first

recommendation was to start the timing of a complaint from the date a complaint is filed. The second is changing from 10 to 14 days, the time for providing notice of a claim of discrimination to a respondent. The third recommendation is that in addition to investigations of complaints being done by a grievance committee, as an alternative, that an authorized HRC Commissioner also be permitted to conduct an investigation.

Frank noted that the Commission was voting to change rules without having reviewed what the Rules were. He suggested that a copy of the Rules be sent and that a vote be taken at the next meeting when everyone had a chance to review the rules. It was decided to postpone the vote on the suggested revisions until the next Commission meeting. It was also noted that the Commission was voting to merely recommend that changes be made to the Rules. The recommendations would still have to be approved by the legal department and the Fair Housing Committee.

The next order of business was the election of a new Chair. The appointments of all Commissioners except Hattie expired on January 1, 2015. Commissioners however, could serve until their successors are appointed. Linda reported that the process of reappointments/appointments was proceeding, though she did not know how long it would take for the process to be completed. Jane made a motion that we elect a Temporary Chair for six months. Hattie seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Nominations were then opened for the election of a Temporary Chair. Sona was nominated but declined. Hattie was nominated and accepted with the request that she have the support of all Commission members. She was elected unanimously.

Under New Business, Linda handed out a flyer about the city's Martin Luther King Day celebration at Temple Emanuel, on January 19, 2015. It was noted that the HRC was not a sponsor of the program and that no one from the Commission had been contacted about the planning of the program.

Betty Chan advised that the Chinese New Year, the year of the sheep, was February 19, 2015. There were going to be New Year's programs at City Hall on January 31st and at New North HS on February 8th. Everyone was invited.

The next meeting will be February 11, 2015 at 7:30 pm in room 222 at City Hall.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Brown