

## THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

### MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 10, 2014 MEETING

Commissioners Present— Peter Brown, Sona Petrossian, Brenda Krasnow, Jane Brown, Nazik Kazimi, Sheila Mondshein, Hattie Kerwin Derrick, Holly Ryan.

Commissioners Not Present— Dianne Chilingirian

Advisory Council Present—Lt Bruce Apotheker and Viviana Planine.

Student Representatives Present—Mia Coleman, Eliza Beth, Anton Mallin and Chris Olsson

Guests – Bryan Barash and Jared Perlo

Staff to the Commission – Linda Walsh

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Peter Brown, who chaired the meeting, called the meeting to order at 7:35 PM in Room 202 in Newton City Hall.

Viviana reported that as of this past noon she was a U.S. citizen. After 40 years living in the states, she was sworn in as a US citizen in a ceremony at the JFK Library. Congratulations were offered.

There were no public comments.

With school just beginning, Mia Coleman reported that the only up-coming event was a school-wide discussion at South about the book “Eleanor and Bark” on September 19<sup>th</sup>.

The minutes of the June 2014 and July 2014 meetings were unanimously approved as read.

QPR training will be conducted by Lt. Apotheker at the October meeting. It should last about 40 minutes.

Lt. Apotheker reported that it was a very quiet summer. There is one incident under investigation as a possible hate crime.

Mention of the Human Rights Commission was included in the Mayor’s column in one of the July issues of the TAB. Linda reported that seven people have expressed an interest in the Commission. The process is that each person will be asked to submit an application and then be interviewed by a city staff person. Recommendations will be sent to the Mayor for his consideration. Appointments will be made by the Mayor. The identities of the interested persons was not given the Commission nor would there be any input from the Commission during the screening and selection process.

Peter and Sona discussed the results of a meeting with the Superintendent of Newton public schools and the Assistant Superintendent for High Schools. The purpose of the meeting to discuss the Asian-American community’s concern that there was no formal procedure for reporting and investigating discrimination complaints in the schools brought by non-students. This concern grew out of the frustration felt by members of the Asian-American community in pursuing complaints resulting from the

“Thoroughly Modern Millie” play. The Superintendent indicated that procedures were already in place to report problems and there was no need to set up another complaint procedure. This was communicated to Alderman Amy Sangiolo who, as of this date, has not gotten back to the Commission about whether there is a desire to pursue further discussions with the school administration.

There was a brief discussion about changing the October meeting date due to a religious holiday on the meeting night. After discussion it was decided that it was best to keep the meeting on October 8<sup>th</sup> as originally scheduled.

After a discussion, the Commission agreed to present the 2014 Human Rights Award to Ambassador Walter and Arese Carrington. Peter agreed to contact the Carringtons about their acceptance and availability. The date of December 10<sup>th</sup> was mentioned as the date of the Awards program and Linda said she would check for the availability of the Library or the Senior Center, as well as the Mayor’s schedule.

Next there was a discussion about who may speak on behalf of the Commission. This arose out of a letter sent to the Mayor by Holly and Linda asking that an amendment to the Commission’s ordinance be docketed before the Board of Alderman. A copy of the proposed amended ordinance was attached. This letter and amendment, sent on behalf of the Commission, was sent without any advance notice to any other Commissioner. In December 2012, the Commission approved requesting an amendment to the Commission’s ordinance to add coverage for “gender identity and expression” as provided in the then recently enacted amendment to the Commonwealth’s discrimination statute. The amendment that was now sent to the Mayor included language not approved by or reported to the Commission prior to it being sent. Holly and Linda explained the circumstances for the letter being sent. The issue of who can speak for and on behalf of the Commission was not resolved.

The Commissioners agreed to put off the election of a Chair until the regularly scheduled January 2015 meeting.

Peter announced that he would not be able to attend the October and November 2014 meetings. Sona agreed to Chair both these meetings.

Under new business, Jane announced a meeting of the Newton Dialogs on October 20, 2014 at 2:00 pm in the War Memorial Auditorium at City Hall. Helen Caldicott will speak on nuclear responsibility.

The next meeting will be Wednesday, October 8, 2014 at 7:30 pm in the City Hall Cafeteria.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Brown