

Human Rights Commission and Advisory Council Minutes

Wednesday, January 9, 2013

7:30 p.m., Newton City Hall, cafeteria

Present: Peter Brown, Dianne Chilingirian, Sona Petrossian, Lt. Bruce Apotheker, Holly Ryan, Jane Brown, Nazik Kazimi, Brenda Krasnow, Hattie N. Kerwin Derrick, Frank Wolpe, Viviana Planine, Sheila Mondshein

Absent: Carol Y. Kelley, Carleton Merrill

Students: Jordi Batler, Abby Coleman

Guests: Gwen Richards, Rebecca O'Brien

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m. Introductions were made.

School Updates

Jordi and Abby gave the following updates from South High. Club fees are being enforced. Letters have been mailed to all students. The world history curriculum has been reviewed to look at alleged propaganda against Israel. This has caused a lot of discussion among the students and has become a topic of conversation. There was a moment of silence to commemorate the tragedy at Newtown, Connecticut. Staff and students discussed security measures at the high schools. Open campus remains a challenge.

Rachel emailed her updates from North High. Leadership has begun planning the final anti-bullying session, which will be piloted at South (not North) in February. We are making a video in which bullies, bystanders and victims will talk about their experiences. The new system has been working and the basketball games have been much more appropriate. The GSA has been planning a trans-day for January 17th to inform the school about what it means to be transgender.

Frank Wolpe announced an upcoming program sponsored by the Crime Commission about gun control and mental health. It will take place Sunday January 13th at the Women's Club.

Approve Minutes

December minutes were approved with one change to the following sentence "...Charter to include *gender identity and expression* (instead of sexual orientation and identity)...."

Hate Crimes

None to report

Programs for Awareness Days/Months

A calendar of events was handed out to the group. The list may not have all of the information that is current. If anyone has additional items to add, please email Linda. Peter said this list could help the group to look ahead and create a program during a specific month.

There was a question about the MLK Day celebration. Hattie made the group aware of the details of the event. She sent an email to Linda with the flyer. Linda will forward the information to the group. Several members asked why the HRC was not included in the planning of the event. Peter will follow-up with Dori and Linda will call the mayor's office. They will ask to be included the next time. Viviana said the HRC could explore doing another event. Bruce asked if we should reach out to the clergy association again to send a representative to their group.

HRC Award Program and venue

Peter said he heard from the agency representing Barney Frank. Rep. Frank would be thrilled to accept the award but no date has been set. If he is appointed as the interim senator, that could complicate things. Two possible locations could be Newton North auditorium and Boston College. Peter will ask for a few available dates and we will work from there.

Amendment to Ordinance – add transgender

Linda handed out the ordinance with the proposed changes to the language. The commissioners voted unanimously to accept the changes. The city has assigned a lawyer to work with Linda on moving this process along. The group would like this to move as quickly as possible and Linda said she would keep them apprised and hopes to put it on the fast track for approval.

Holly described a new bill that will be introduced relative to equal access and the public accommodation law. Holly will keep us informed.

Change of meeting date and vote

After some discussion about changing the meeting night, it was decided to leave the meeting date to the second Wednesday evening of the month.

Other Business

Brenda handed out a flyer about a bill prohibiting the participation of health care professionals in the torture or abuse of prisoners. Peter said people could read about it and discuss it at next month's meeting.

Linda handed out the annual 'conflict of interest' booklets to all commissioners. Linda will submit the signatory page to the clerk's office. At the end of January, all commissioners will receive an email to take the on line training course developed by the state ethics commission.

Adjourn 9:05 p.m.