

## **Human Rights Commission and Advisory Council Minutes**

Wednesday, February 13, 2013

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

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

Absent: Carol Y. Kelley, Jane Brown

Students: Jordi Batler, Abby Coleman, Andy Frank, Rachel Bass

Guests: none

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

### School Updates

Rachel reported that North High recently held 2 awareness days; Transgender and Asian American culture. She also said the basketball games have gone well without any incidents. The anti-bullying lessons are much more relaxed with a lot more dialog. Jordi and Abby gave updates from South High. Tuleeka is working on her program for the days of remembrance. A driver distraction program will be held that teaches students about the dangers of distracted driving using a simulator. A recent lion's roar article was written about relationship and dating abuse. The final bullying lesson was presented and focused on racial differences and how to include all groups effectively. Rachel added that the leadership group will be travelling to New Orleans to help rebuild after Katrina.

### Approve Minutes

January minutes were approved as written

### Hate Crimes

None to report

### Message from Shawn Fitzgibbons

Peter read the following letter into the record.....

“Dear Frank, Would you kindly pass this message along to the Newton Human Rights Commission? As you know the Boy Scouts of America recently announced that they will end their national ban on gay members. This is wonderful news and hopefully it will not take another twenty years for the organization to repair the damage it has done to its reputation. For it is a great organization that teaches young people both good morals and vitally-important leadership skills. The protest you and I have discussed involving the return of Eagle Scout awards, and which I presented before the Newton Human Rights Commission, is no longer necessary. I would like to thank you, Chairman Peter Brown and all other Commissioners for their willingness to hear about and take action on the issue of discrimination by the Scouts. I was impressed and heartened by the group's commitment to social justice. To you and the Newton HRC, keep up the great work and thank you again! Shawn Fitzgibbons”

### HRC Award Program and venue

The date for the award had been set for April 3<sup>rd</sup>, however Peter is not available. The group decided to change the date. Linda will contact Barney Frank's scheduler to ask about the following dates; April 23, 25 or 30<sup>th</sup>.

### Amendment to Ordinance – add transgender

Peter will write a letter to the Mayor requesting the ordinance change to be docketed on the board of alderman calendar.

### Other Business

Members of the commission would like to be able to offer guidance to the students who develop the programs for the days of remembrance to advise students to include the holocaust in all programs about genocide.

Fair housing committee is concerned that few complaints are being filed. Clients may not be comfortable filing complaints due to fear of retaliation, therefore, a short optional anonymous form is being developed. This could be useful as a point of entry that may lead to a complaint.

Holly will be on a host committee in June briefing the ACLU on LGBT rights.

February is domestic violence month.

The Newton senior center hosted a program on cultural competency entitled "A Caring Response for LGBT clients".

A veteran's center will be opened in Newton at the American Legion Post 440. A grand opening will be held in May.

Adjourn 9:00 p.m.