

Human Rights Commission and Advisory Council Minutes

Wednesday, May 8, 2013

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

Present: Peter Brown, Dianne Chilingirian, Sona Petrossian, Lt. Bruce Apotheke, Nazik Kazimi, Brenda Krasnow, Hattie N. Kerwin Derrick, Frank Wolpe, Sheila Mondschein, Jane Brown

Absent: Holly Ryan, Carol Y. Kelley, Viviana Planine

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

Guests: Vinat Farina

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. Introductions were made.

School Updates

South High - Southeast Asian club held a HOBI celebration. Students are traveling to Providence RI to cheer on the Dreamfar Marathon group. Seniors are taking part in a water tag activity called 'senior assassins'. There was discussion in the group about the name and purpose of this game since toy guns are used.

North High – BLCK day was held – there was a movie shown about race relations and an expert panel. Winnie Chen from InvenTeam has created a pedestrian alert system for use in third world countries. There is a link on the website about this program. To be GLAD day was very successful. There was a panel of faculty and students. GELF raised money for students to go on exchange programs that can't afford them.

Approve Minutes

February and March minutes were approved.

LGBT Aging Project

HRC will be a co-sponsor of the LGBT Aging project screening of the documentary 'Gen Silent'. This program will be held at the Newton Senior Center on June 19, 2013 from 6-8.

Hate Crimes

Graffiti of swastikas was reported in Newton Centre on a wall of a building. The investigation is ongoing. There are 2 suspects (juveniles) who will be charged.

There was discussion about the way these incidences are reported and about the public perception of when to report human rights violations and what is done with these reports. There is no uniformity in reporting instances of hate and every community gives out the information differently. Bruce talked about how he reports the incidences to the media.

Bruce talked about the new D A, Maryann Ryan, from Middlesex partnerships for youth. They provide a lot of good programs on Drugs and Alcohol use. The biggest gateway drug is cigarettes. The YRBS data from Newton shows the use of drugs and alcohol and compares it to the state of Massachusetts. The crime commission addresses some of these things.

Other Business

The Fair Housing committee is having a presentation on Monday night at 7 PM entitled "The New Neighbors" A short film will be followed by a panel discussion.

The chairperson of the Newton clergy association will be changing in the next month. Members discussed the desire to become reestablished with this group and send a member to their meetings.

Outreach to Newton residents of different nationalities was discussed. One idea was to use the census data to identify these groups. Diane will bring the information to the next meeting. Ana Gonzalez is working for the mayor's office and meets with the neighborhood organizations. She could be invited to an upcoming meeting so that we could discuss how to reach out and/or identify these groups.

The days of remembrance was held at the high schools last month. It was noted that the holocaust should never be forgotten and should always be included in all programs. Every effort should be made to accomplish this. It was also noted that programs are organized by students and dependent on the time in the school day/week schedule as well as the availability of the speaker. This year, one day was canceled by the administration. We have no control over that.

Viviana could not make it to the meeting. An email sent to Linda was read to the group thanking them for their support.

There was discussion about looking for opportunities for the HRC to be more visible in the community. The picture from the awards evening was submitted to the local paper but was not printed yet. That was just one thought of how to increase visibility and let the public know what the commission stands for.

Adjourn 8:50 p.m.

