

Human Rights Commission and Advisory Council minutes

Wednesday – March 14, 2012

7:30 pm – Newton City Hall – rm. 222

Present:

Jane Brown, Sheila Mondschein, Brenda Krasnow, Bruce Apotheker, Peter Brown, Sona Petrossian, Carol Kelley, Viviana Planine, Holly Ryan, Hattie Kerwin Derick, Dianne Chilingerian, HHS Commissioner Dori Zaleznik, student representatives; Abby Coleman, Jordi Batler, Veronica Ingham

Absent:

Ann Capoccia, Carleton Merrill, Norman Lazarus, Joan Rubin, Lillian Backman, Frank Wolpe, Nazik Kazimi,

Dori announced the meeting would be recorded.

Meeting was called to order at 7:30pm

Mayor Setti warren spoke for a few minutes. He thanked everyone for their dedication to this commission. He reviewed the challenges in the City and highlighted some accomplishments. He emphasized the importance of respect for all people and the importance of the work of the human rights commission.

The meeting was dedicated to the memory of Sam Glass, advisory council member who died this month. A moment of silence was held in honor of Sam.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes from February were approved as written.

School updates

Tuleeka Hazra gave a report on a program to take place on the 'day of remembrance' at South. She arranged to have speakers talk about the genocides that have occurred since the Holocaust. The program will be in the lecture hall and there will be a speaker presenting during every block. Tuleeka would like to continue this type of presentation to the community and hopes to get some grant money to be able to do that. The program is entitled HIS (our) TORY.

Jordi announced that there is ongoing RAD (Rape Aggression Defense) training at South. Also "daffodil days", a fundraiser for American Cancer Society, will occur this month.

Abby said the 4th day of the bullying program will be held this week.

Veronica gave a report on activities at North. She is in a leadership class that addresses issues of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity. She also attended a 2 day retreat on anti-bullying initiatives and is involved in the MVP (mentors in violence prevention) program. She described an incident that happened several weeks ago. A new student to the school posted a threatening and derogatory message a few days before 'to be glad' day.

Hate Crime/Incident Reports

Incident at North High on 2/29/12. A student posted antigay and threatening remarks on Facebook. Other students came forward and told school personnel. The incident was investigated and is being handled by the authorities. Newton police are seeking complaints against the alleged perpetrator.

New Business

Process for choosing a chair

There was consensus to go forward this evening and vote for a chairperson. Peter Brown was nominated. Several members asked Peter questions and spoke of the qualities they are looking for in a chair. Peter spoke about his vision for the group. The vote was taken and it passed unanimously. Dori relinquished the chair to Peter and he ran the remainder of the meeting.

Presentation by newly appointed HRC commissioner Holly Ryan

Holly presented information to the group on the 'Act Relative to Gender Identity' that passed the house and senate in November 2011. She spoke about her advocacy work and the fact that legislature did not include protections within the public accommodations sections of the non-discrimination laws. MTPC will continue this work. Holly would like to have the HRC do a program for the community on this new law, which takes effect on July 1, 2012. She has been approached by business owners who want to know more about the law. The group asked some questions about the format of the program. It would be held in June. Peter said anyone interested in working on this should stay at the end of the meeting.

Program Planning – Community conference idea – Peter Brown

Peter spoke about a community program held in the town of Winchester. The program was a daylong event and featured people who are 'experts' in their own community on the topics of race relations. This type of program could draw from our own citizens in Newton. They would volunteer to share their expertise with the community. The program could be planned for the fall

Peter spoke about the 'Occupy Boston' group. Jane said the 'Occupy Newton' group is still active.

Invitation to Adams St synagogue

Linda made 3 announcements:

- The Adams St Synagogue will be having an event honoring Walter Cuenin. It will be held on Sunday June 3, 2012.

- The Board of Alderman is planning to honor Sam Glass at their meeting on March 19th.
- A reception will be held at the Newton Free Library on Monday March 19th at 7:30 PM for Isabel Wilkerson, the author of The Warmth of Other Suns.

Budget Report

Linda distributed a copy of the budget items and expenditures for this fiscal year. There is a balance of \$618.78 that needs to be spent before June 30, 2012.

Old Business

none

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 PM