

Human Rights Commission and Advisory Council Minutes

Wednesday, July 12, 2012

7:30 p.m., Newton City Hall, Room 209

Present: Peter Brown, Dianne Chilingirian, Sheila Mondshein, Sona Petrossian, Lt. Bruce Apotheker, Frank Wolpe

Absent: Viviana Planine, Hattie N. Kerwin Derrick, Holly Ryan, Nazik Kazimi, Jane Brown, Brenda Krasnow, Carol Y. Kelley, Lillian Backman, Ann Capoccia, Carleton Merrill, Norman Lazarus

Guest: Greg Smith

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m. Introductions were made. Peter announced there is not a quorum so no votes can take place at tonight's meeting. It was noted that advisory council member Viviana Planine will be on sabbatical this coming semester.

School Updates

Newton Police Cops and Kids program is happening this summer. On July 25th there will be an 8th grade trip to JFK Library.

The youth services position in the HHS dept. will be posted again.

The Teen Center is now located at the YMCA. Chanda Gunn is the director of the program.

There was discussion about representation from the 2 high schools. Newton South is well represented at our meetings. We need a liaison from Newton North. Sona continues to work on this.

Hate Crimes

There was one incident to report on Kilburn Rd at the Wellington playground. Graffiti was found with the N word, a swastika, a satanic symbol and anti-gay slur. Police do not know when it was done but it appears to be done by youth. Officers are increasing patrols in the area.

There was a discussion about possibly doing a program regarding these incidences however the reports of this type of incident are very low. Therefore Bruce said it may be best not to give them too much attention. Sometimes these incidences are just an outcome of having nothing to do. There was group discussion about whether or not there a role for the HRC. The commission has offered this type of programming in the past and it has been well received drawing a large crowd. Peter will check with Brenda to see if the program committee would discuss this possibility.

Summary of architectural access action plan –

Sheila Mondshein gave a summary of a report entitled "Ramping Up: Planning for a more accessible Newton" A consultant, Barbara Chandler, at the request of the fair housing committee, wrote the report after extensive research that looked at the procedures and policies in the city of Newton.

There were 3 major recommendations made:

- 1 – The city should have an ADA and section 504 coordinator position
- 2 – The city must have an ADA 504 plan
- 3 - ISD should work together with the planning and inspectional services departments to review federal compliance

Recommendations to the human rights commission were:

- 1-The need for educational programs
- 2- The need to understand and explore why complaints have not been filed on the failure to design and construct new housing developments

An action plan was developed:

- 1- Create an ADA and section 504 plan
- 2- Develop coordinator position and fund it
- 3- Pursue the creation of systems for review for federal compliance
- 4- Determine how many accessible units are being provided
- 5- Create a fair housing marketing plan
- 6- Develop a process to review city plans with no negative impact
- 7- Require a procedure to have reasonable accommodations policy available
- 8- Provide training and education for everybody

There was general discussion about the report. One suggestion was that the HRC could send a letter of support to the mayor to fund the ADA coordinator position. This could be placed on the agenda for the fall for discussion.

Catrin Lynch Program

HRC will be co-sponsoring a program on Oct 18th called "Retirement on the Line" at 7 pm to be held at the Newton Free Library.

New Business

The MAHRC meeting this month was a presentation from Boston Principle on dealing with immigration issues. Martha Davis will come to our meeting in October.

A template of a letter was created that could be used to provide a prompt response to a hate incident in Newton.

A Dept. of Justice program "Emerging Issues in Human Rights" was held at in Boston and features Eric Holzer.

Peter is working with Jayne Colino on programs about aging in Newton.

Ana Gonzalez has a new position as the community engagement director. She is now in charge of boards and commissions. She is getting the word out at community meetings about the various openings, including HRC.

Bruce suggested reaching out to veterans, especially returning vets who may need help.

Peter spoke about a possibility for a show on NewTV. The cost would be \$100.

Dianne spoke about the state budget and possible cuts to services for the mentally ill. She will send out information so the state representatives can be called. Linda will distribute the information

Sheila said she drafted some language to amend the HRC ordinance for it to be consistent with new Massachusetts law. It will be sent to Holly first then sent to the city's law department to get advice on next steps to change/amend the ordinance.

Guest Greg Smith spoke about his interest in the area of special education and the Newton school system, in particular what happens when a parent disagrees with the decision of the school system regarding placement of a student. He was also concerned about physical restraint. Sheila said there are special needs advocates that specialize in that area of the law. Peter said that it may be possible to do a program to educate people on this and to increase awareness. Linda said school nurses are involved when there is physical restraint of a student. The focus is on safety of both the staff and the student.

Adjourn 9:05 PM

Next meeting Sept 12, 2012