

**Human Rights Commission**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**January 13, 2010**  
**7:30 PM in the Newton City Hall cafeteria**

**Attendance:**

Commissioners present: Jane Brown, Peter Brown, Muriel Esdale, Brenda Krasnow, Sheila Mondshein, Sona Petrossian, and Susan Thomas

Commissioners absent/regrets: Marianne Ferguson (Chair), Judy Fischbach

Advisory Council Members present: Lt. Bruce Apotheker, Lillian Backman, Ann Capoccia, Dianne Chilingerian, Sam Glass, Carol Kelley, Viviana Planine, Joan Rubin and Frank Wolpe

Advisory Council Members absent/regrets: Homer Franck, Nazik Kazimi, Norman Lazarus, Carleton Merrill, Myrna Offen, and Suzy Rosenthal

Advisory Students present: Camilla Jackson (NNHS), and Stephi Dworkin (NSHS)

Staff present: Beverly Droz

Guests: Ophelia Boachie, Leona Markiewicz, Ellen Lubell, Ald. Stephen Linsky

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**The meeting opened at 7:30 PM and was chaired by Jane Brown**

Introductions were made around the room and guests were welcomed.

**School Updates:**

**Newton South High School –**

Stephi reported that the Chestnut Street Teen Center had a concert on December 5 to raise money for A.I.D.S. orphans and vulnerable children in South Africa. The second and last training for the Mentors in Violence Prevention Program was held on January 7. The South Anti-War Club presented part one of a series of speakers on the War on Terror on December 11 with Paul Beran, from Harvard University's Center of Middle Eastern Studies. The Russian exchange students have returned to Russia and enjoyed their studies at NSHS. Several students from NSHS went to New Delhi for the Indian Exchange Program to perform various community service projects and tour various areas. NSHS is the first public school in Massachusetts to have an Indian Exchange Program. The students participating in the China Exchange Program will be leaving at the end of January. The WISE kick-off dinner took place on January 12.

**Newton North High School –**

Camilla reported that in December, a speaker presented on the consequences of drinking and driving. A speaker about Rwanda presented on new and old world issues, internal violence, and what people can do to help. There was also a program on "Modern Heroes" where readings of writings about heroes in the community were performed.

**Hate Crimes/Incidents**

Lt. Apotheker updated the Commission on hate crimes and incidents.

- Today, an officer responded to the Learning Prep School for a swastika in the boys' bathroom
- There will be a public service announcement about kids and drinking; he will contact the students.

Lt. Apotheker provided a graphic handout charting the statistics of hate crimes/incidents involving anti-Semitic, anti-black, anti-gay and other incidents from 2005 through 2009. The years with the lowest overall incidents were 2006 and 2007, followed by 2009. Anti-Semitic incidents always outnumber all the other types of incidents. But overall, the numbers of incidents are low.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

### **Fair Housing:**

Sheila reported that there will be a February 2 program on fair housing for real estate professionals. Training curriculum will include information on applicable laws for protected classes, exemptions and prohibited acts, tenant screening and application processes, the complaint process and special topics including lead paint laws, disability discrimination and Section 8 Housing Choice vouchers. The training will take place in the Druker Auditorium at the library from 2-5 PM. On February 22, there will be another training program for social service providers regarding fair housing, and will take place from 1-4 PM at the library.

### **Program Committee:**

Brenda spoke about the Traces of the Trade program, which will begin with its first installment on Thursday, March 11 at 7 PM at the Boston College Law School. The room seats approximately 120 people, and there is plenty of parking available. The publicity for the event is currently in the planning stages. The program is in collaboration with co-sponsors Traces of the Trade organization, the Historic Newton/Jackson Homestead, Mayor's Office for Cultural Affairs and the Newton Foundation for Racial, Ethnic and Religious Harmony. Bev was asked to invite the Mayor.

Susan prepared a Traces of the Trade flyer to be distributed at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Celebration on January 18. Susan also stated that the HRC commissioners have agreed to purchase a DVD and five books, Inheriting the Trade by Thomas DeWolf. Susan is asking that each co-sponsoring agency for our HRC program contribute some funding if possible. The first of the series will involve the film screening and discussion led by James DeWolf Perry. The film lasts 50 minutes and the discussion will take an hour.

### **Education Committee:**

Sona reported that she has been working on getting the high school students school credit for their human rights work. She has a meeting set up with Superintendent Marini. The Days of Remembrance will take place on April 6 at NNHS, and she asked Viviana to set it up for April at NSHS.

**Communications Committee:** No report

**Membership:** No report

### **MAHRC:**

Peter noted that the coalition has only met twice since September 2009. They only meet when they have enough interested people planning on attending. The meetings are very informational and supportive. The next meeting is scheduled for February 12 at 9:30 AM in the Medford City Hall. Peter stated that he will not be able to attend and asked to let him know who might go in his stead.

**Clergy Association:** No report

### **Administrative Business**

A motion to approve the December 9, 2009 meeting minutes was made by Sona, seconded by Brenda and the minutes were accepted.

Bev provided the Treasurer's Report. The report indicates that as of July 1, 2009, there was an opening balance of \$850.00. The December awards event cost \$304.01. Other postage expenses, printing expenses and program expenses totaled \$124.98, leaving the balance for the FY09/10 account at \$421.01. The HRC revolving account as of December 23, 2009 was \$664.98 due to some contributions made in Audrey Cooper's honor. A motion was made by Brenda, and seconded by Susan to accept the Treasurer's Report and the motion passed.

### **Other Business & Announcements**

Peter mentioned that at a previous meeting, it was discussed having a HRC group go to the Boston Food Pantry. He got their information and presented it. The shifts are Monday through Saturday and run two and a half hours each. Occasionally, they have shifts Wednesday evenings from 5:30 to 8PM. Peter took a quick poll of HRC members present and approximately nine are interested. Most people prefer the evening shift. He will try to book an evening shift, which will take a few months.

Jane called for other HRC business, but there wasn't any.

### **Guest presentation**

We welcomed attorney Ellen Lubell and Ald. Stephen Linsky. They had requested to be able to present to the HRC about their current work. Bev had emailed the information ahead of time to the HRC, and she brought hard copies of the "Resolution for the Board of Aldermen" and a summary of the resolution.

It was noted that Ellen Lubbell and Doris Tennant, who have represented Guantanamo Bay detainee Abdul Aziz Naji, were recognized by the HRC for their efforts and received the HRC Award in Dec. 2008.

Ellen detailed their involvement over the past four years and thoroughly explained the situation that has developed. She answered questions from various HRC members. For the page of notes about her presentation, please contact HRC staff director Beverly Droz at 617-796-1290. It was noted that the United States Congress forbids any Guantanamo Bay detainees to come to our country and this is a symbolic resolution being put before the Board of Aldermen because of the human rights issues involved.

Alderman Linsky said that the resolution is docketed with the full Board of Aldermen on January 19. The Program and Service Committee have reviewed it and voted for it unanimously. Susan moved and Sona seconded that the resolution be symbolically endorsed by the HRC and it passed with three abstaining from voting and 14 voting for it.

The Commission thanked Ms. Lubbell and Alderman Linsky.

Jane called for other business before the HRC, but there wasn't any.

**The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 PM.**

**NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, February 10, 2010 and will take place in Room 222.**

Respectfully submitted, Beverly Droz, HRC staff director, and Suzy Rosenthal, HRC Advisory Council