

Human Rights Commission and Advisory Council

Wednesday – September 22, 2010

7:30 pm – Newton City Hall – Veterans Conference Room

Attendance:

Commissioners present: Peter Brown, Marianne Ferguson (chair), Brenda Krasnow, Sona Petrossian, Jane Brown, Carol Kelley, Judy Fischbach.

Commissioners absent/regrets: Sheila Mondshein, Susan Thomas,

Advisory council members present: Lt. Bruce Apotheke, Dianne Chilingerian, Lillian Backman, Nazik Kazimi, Viviana Planine, Joan Rubin, Frank Wolpe

Advisory council members absent/regrets: Homer Franck, Samuel Glass, Norman F.Lazarus, Carleton Merrill, Myrna Offen, Susan Rosenthal, Nazik Kazimi, Ann Capoccia,

Advisory Students present: none

Advisory Students council members absent/regrets: Camilla Jackson-NNHS, Haniya Syeda-NNHS, and Lily Konowitz- NSHS

Guest: Pat Hamilton

Meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm and introductions of all present.

School Updates: None

Hate Crime/Incident Reports – Lt. Bruce Apotheker reported one incident involving a Mt Ida student who made racial comments towards 2 black males. He was arrested. Bruce also said the police department is looking at the old Newton Corner library to house several departments that do community service work; health, social services, domestic violence. If everyone was on one building it could be ‘one stop shopping’ for citizens.

Peter said the commission had offered programs to Mt Ida in the past and was very successful. Bruce said he would look in to that. Brenda asked about excessive speeding on Carlson Ave. Bruce said there have been officers posted in that area. He would encourage residents to call police to report any speeding. Frank asked if Mt Ida has police. Bruce said no, but they have public safety officers.

Administrative Business

Marianne said that she attended the training given at City Hall regarding the new open meeting law. She showed the booklet to the group. Linda will bring copies to the next meeting. The commission must follow the rules or the City could be fined. The rules also applies to any sub committees. A meeting must be given at least 48 hours notice not counting Saturdays or Sundays. The notice must include an agenda and the agenda has to be specific. Sona asked if the commission needs to act quickly, how would that be managed. Marianne said an immediate response would be problematic if action needed to be taken. Linda said she would request a city solicitor attend a future meeting. Peter said that a discussion can happen but you cannot make decisions or take action. Marianne also said all meetings must be handicap accessible and the notice must include the information about handicap accessibility. Minutes must be kept for all meetings. No ballot votes are authorized and no absentee voting can be done.

Committee Reports, if any

Fair housing

Marianne said she received a request for the commission to cosponsor a program being presented by U-CHAN – October 14 from 7-9 pm. The topic will be the repeal of 40B. Peter felt we should not co-sponsor this event because we are a government body and therefore not appropriate to take a stand. Marianne asked how this would differ from our sponsoring a program on trans gender or gay marriage? Peter said our mandate is for equal treatment. Frank asked about our mission statement and if we are advisory. Brenda said that she agrees with Peter that we cannot support only one side of the issue. Peter said we should stay out of politics and focus on human rights. Brenda said that educating the public is the issue. Marianne called for a vote. Dianne asked if we could actually vote at this meeting. The matter was taken up under ‘new business’. The vote was so moved. 2 members voted yes, 7 members voted no and 2 abstained.

Program committee

None

Education committee

Sona donated a book to be put into the lending library entitled “Start-up Nation. The Story of Israel’s Economic Miracle” by Dan Senor and Saul Singer. Sona sent a message to both high school principals and is waiting for a staff person to represent North High. Sona said is looking to add Native Americans to the days of remembrance. Carol said she knows a Native American gentleman that may be interested.

Communications

Marianne said the committee is still looking for help on this sub committee.

Membership

Jane and Sona are the new chairs of this sub committee. Marianne said they had a meeting with the mayor. They discussed the brochure and the openings on the commission. They were introduced to Sarah Ecker, Director of Community Relations. Sarah is overseeing committees and commissions. In the past the commission needed to solicit for open positions. The executive office will be overseeing this process. Marianne said that Carol Kelley has been appointed by the Mayor as commissioner. If a term ends, and you are still interested in applying, you should send a letter of interest and your updated resume. There are some interested people looking to get on to committees and commissions. Peter asked if they would get notified when their term is up. Sona said Sarah has the list and that 5 of the commissioners are affected now.

MAHRC (Mass Assoc. of Human Rights and Human Relations Commission)

Peter said due to various holidays, there has not been a meeting. Upcoming meeting this month hopefully will happen. He reminded the group of the upcoming opportunity to volunteer at the food bank. February 2nd from 5-8:30.

Any other new of sub committee

Awards

Judy said the date has been set for the award at the Senior Center, December 9, 2010. This year they have several nominees. Only one nominee has complete paperwork. The other nominees need additional information. Nominations are open until the end of the month. Nazik talked about nominating the executive director of an organization called 'communities without borders'. Judy said the following names have been submitted; Rebecca Kantor, Joan Kunitz, Bruce Apotheker, David Pettee and James DeWolf Perry, Susan Suskind.

Pat Hamilton is a guest at the meeting. She spoke about nominating Mary Margaret Pappas. She is committed to working with people with disabilities and has been a mentor. Judy asked for help in getting further information about the nominees. In the past, the person nominating needed to do the research. Nazik said we should narrow the list to 2-3. Marianne said that will be done and a vote would be taken the next meeting. Dianne said a form had gone out and that form should be used. Dianne also asked to get copies in advance of the vote.

Clergy association

none

Other Business

Marianne said the Needham Human Rights Committee is holding a program on October 17th in the Needham Library; “Islam in America, A Candid Discussion”

Marianne said to submit any agenda items to Linda prior to next meeting.

July Minutes accepted without changes

Next meeting; October 13, 2010

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 PM