

**Human Rights Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
March 11, 2009  
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

Commissioner absent/regrets: Marianne Ferguson and Judy Fischbach

Advisory Council Members present: Lt. Bruce Apotheker, Homer Franck, Samuel Glass, Nazik Kazimi, Norman Lazarus, Viviana Planine, Suzy Rosenthal, Joan Rubin and Frank Wolpe

Advisory Council Members absent/regrets: Ann Capoccia, Dianne Chilingirian, Carol Kelley, Matt McBride, Carleton Merrill, Myrna Offen, and David Rosen

Advisory Students present: Hannah Konowitz

Students absent/regrets: Hannah Yarmolinsky, Chloe Judell-Halfpenny, and Julijana Englander

Staff present: Beverly Droz

Guests: Miriam Hickey, Lillian Backman, Charles Rudrick and Ophelia Boachie

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**The meeting opened** at 7:30 pm and was chaired by Peter Brown.

Introductions were made around the room and guests were welcomed.

**School Updates:**

**NSHS –**

Hannah reported on the various activities, and Viviana brought in copies of program flyers.

- Red Hand Day was held in February to support children who are forced to fight in wars.
- In conjunction with the Newton Community Service Center, the Mentor Connection program is being re-launched. The program pairs adult mentors with children at risk in the community.
- In February, the Peer Education program took place where students from the high school visited the middle schools to talk about peer issues.
- The One-to-One program visited the Science Museum on Sunday, February 8.
- Black History month in February was a success with various programs presented. Some of the programs included a gospel celebration, African origins of greatness and history of African music.
- MIT visited the school today to talk to the student body about engineering.
- STAND (Students Take Action Now Darfur) hosted a benefit concert on March 7 where local bands played.
- The annual Close Up trip is getting ready to take place. Sophomores will travel to Washington D.C.
- The musical, "The South Stage Cabaret" will be playing at NSHS from March 19-21.
- MINGA will be presenting a movie week from March 23-37.
- The West Roxbury Exchange program will take place March 19 and March 23. Students from each school visit the other school.
- The Newton South Mock Trial team defeated the Windsor School on March 10.
- The annual Empty Bowls fundraiser will be held on March 20. The fundraiser involves students making ceramic bowls and bringing soup to be donated to the Bristol Lodge Soup Kitchen.
- The Daffodil Days fundraiser for the American Cancer Society took place.
- The Club Fair was presented again and the Hrambee Gospel group performed.

Sona discussed the Days of Remembrance, which will take place from April 27-May 1 at NSHS and at NNHS on May 1 and said that student representatives are helping to set up the program. Days of Remembrance is an exhibit that focuses on genocide from that of the Holocaust to those that have and are still occurring in Rwanda, the Sudan, Vietnam, Armenia and Darfur.

**NNHS –** No report

## **Hate Crimes/Incidents**

Lt. Bruce Apotheker reported on:

- Only one hate crime was reported. It took place on March 6 and involved by a man going into the Bank of America in Newtonville. The man was hit in the head by an egg thrown by a passing vehicle. The vehicle then circled back around and as it was passing him, the driver yelled "Kike".
- Lt. Apotheker stated that his bureau has been expanded to include domestic violence and elderly abuse issues.

## **MINUTES & TREASURER'S REPORT**

**A motion to accept the 1/14/09 minutes was approved.** A change will be made that reflects Frank Wolpe's absence.

Bev presented the Treasurer's Report. The unexpected cost for the website domain renewal for five years was \$115.00 and \$336.00 was spent on redoing some of the materials for the Days of Remembrance exhibit. The current balance is approximately \$59.

Sona discussed the revolving account and suggested that ideas for fundraising to get money into this account should be sent to Bev.

**A motion to accept the Treasurer's report was approved.**

## **NEW OR OLD BUSINESS**

### **Needham Human Rights Committee**

Bev announced the co-sponsoring of a program with the Needham HRC. The program will focus on immigration myths. The speaker will be Aviva Chomsky who will discuss the ideas in her book "They Take Our Jobs and 20 other Myths about Immigration". The program will take place on May 19, 2009 at 7:30 PM at the Needham Library. Bev is waiting to receive the flyer designed by the Needham HRC. We would have no financial involvement. We would just help publicize the event in our city.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Membership:** Muriel welcomed guests. No report was presented.

### **Fair Housing:**

Sheila explained that the Fair Housing Committee in Newton was established in early February and announced that she was appointed as the Chairperson. This is an important growth from the former Fair Housing Task Force. The committee will have 11 members who will advocate for fair housing in Newton. On May 4 a public meeting will be held at the Senior Center.

### **Program:**

Brenda reported that the February 11 "**Challenging Prejudice in Newton and Beyond**" program on prejudice at the library was a success. Some feedback was received which was good. The location for future programs was discussed. The Swedish House may be a good option. A discussion followed about structuring programs. Brenda thanked everyone who helped with the event.

Jane reported on the sub-committee planning the Israeli-Palestinian Program to be held April 30 at 7pm in the City Hall War Memorial Auditorium. Father Walter Cuenin said he will be honored to be the moderator. She and Nazik are holding a planning meeting on March 18 at 7pm and Bev will find an available room at City Hall.

### **Education:**

Sona stated that the Days of Remembrance exhibit was updated and that the NSHS will have the Days of Remembrance right after Spring Break so that the exhibit will be set up before the vacation begins. Sona reported that NNHS presents some challenges for housing the exhibit because the library area is small and the exhibit isn't embraced. An attempt to get word of the exhibit in the school newspapers is underway. Sona said that Julijana and other students have been very helpful. Lt. Apotheker suggested that a trailer to house the exhibit might be a possibility.

### **Communication/PR:**

Susan discussed the Newton Fact Sheet that she compiled for the February 11 program and suggested that it be displayed on the website. Bev brought out extra copies of it for members to take.

**MAHRC** (Mass. Association of Human Rights Commissions)

Peter reported that plans are in progress for an April meeting in Framingham including all of the commissions. The meeting will focus on immigration issues.

**Newton Clergy Association:**

Sam reported that after the Temple Shalom incident, he had Lt. Apotheker attend the NCA (Newton Clergy Association) meeting. However, due to the winter storm, attendance was poor so Sam will reschedule his presentation.

Sam suggested HRC consider having a speaker who was involved with the film "Schindler's List".

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Jane announced that peace groups from Newton, Waltham and Watertown will hold a Candlelight Vigil and Protest to end the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan on Thursday, March 19 from 5:30-7:30 PM in Watertown Square.

Jane announced she attended a forum sponsored by WILPF (Women's International League of Peace and Freedom) about genocide in the Congo. It was horrible to learn of the millions killed and the women so brutalized. She handed out a petition for members to sign if they cared to do so.

Bev handed out flyers for the League of Women Voters "Critical Choices for Newton, 2009 and Beyond: Discussing the Citizen Advisory Group Findings and Recommendations". There will be various meetings February through May addressing the many issues facing Newton.

**The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM.**

**NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, April 7, 2009 (due to Passover holidays) at Newton City Hall.**

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