

**Human Rights Commission**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**July 9, 2008**  
**7:30 PM in the Newton City Hall cafeteria**

**Attendance:**

Commissioners present: Jane Brown, Peter Brown, Muriel Esdale, Marianne Ferguson (Chair), Judy Fischbach  
Brenda Krasnow, Sheila Mondschein,  
Commissioner absent/regrets: Sona Petrossian, Susan Thomas

Advisory Council Members present: Lt. Bruce Apotheker, Dianne Chilingirian, Sam Glass, Carol Y. Kelley, Joan Rubin, Sharon O. Stout,

Advisory Council Members absent/regrets: Ann Capoccia, Homer Franck, Nazik Kazimi, Norman Lazarus, Matt McBride, Carleton Merrill, Myrna Offen, Viviane Planine, David Rosen, Armando Rossi, Frank Wolpe

Students present:

Students regrets: Julijana Englander, Ali Zaidi

Staff present: Beverly Droz

Guests: Henry Korman, Fair Housing Task Force chair person; Trisha Guditz, Newton Housing Office director

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**The meeting opened** at 7:35 pm

Everyone was welcomed and introductions were made around the room.

The minutes of the May 14, 2008 meeting were approved.

Marianne read Homer Franck's emailed comments about the June 11 meeting.

The minutes of the June 11, 2008 meeting were approved with a note that the last two items specify establishing a sub-committee to explore a program (on the issue mentioned).

**School Updates:** None

**Hate Crimes/Incidents**

Lt. Bruce Apotheker reported on items since our May meeting:

- At the end of May, the non-profit Mayyim Hayyim next to Temple Reyim reported phone messages with swear words and a young male stating he had stole their signs. The signs had been stolen about 6 weeks before hand. Police have been investigating and have caller ID # on the individual. Bruce reminded us that Temple Reyim's signs were destroyed months back. In early June the Temple reported the large banner in the front yard was stolen. It's an ongoing investigation.
- On June 19 there was a fight between a 54 yr-old male and 2 younger men. There was name calling and after further investigation, the Police are seeking complaints against the older male for assault and battery for the purpose of intimidation based on race or color.

**Fair Housing Task Force Presentation:**

The Commission welcomed Henry Korman, FHTF Chair, and Trisha Guditz, Housing Office Director. They reminded the Commission that Newton is the recipient of HUD funds and with this there are obligations: a 5 year plan of housing strategy. First they did the Analysis of Impediments (AI) which scans for civil rights and fair housing as it affects housing in Newton to determine any barriers.

Until 2005, AI identified the lack of affordable housing. The FHTF began working and looking at issues that affect protected classes of people. They expanded the scan and commissioned 2 fair housing audits

- Rental and Sales Audit to determine discrimination based on race, ethnicity, family status, Section 8.. They found discrimination in 46% of the testing cases.
- Disabilities testing found discrimination in 48% of the testing cases.

In scanning the City's own housing activities and program participation, overall, they find Newton to be exemplary. They identified the need for improvement in providing access for people with ESL. They have a recommendation to shape selection preferences to be more welcoming. They discovered a lack of capacity

within the City's level of compliance for architectural access. The 18-month FHIP (Fair Housing Initiative Program) grant has been carried out to provide extensive trainings, education and outreach to a wide variety of stakeholders.

They have developed a Fair Housing Action Plan and are presenting it tonight, and seeking the endorsement of the HRC. Copies of "Fair Housing Action Plan - Opening the Doors: Newton, A Welcoming Community" were handed out. It has 4 sections, as well as extensive appendices:

1. Introduction with purpose, background, planning process and action summary
2. Action Plan Principles – 5 basic operating principles
3. Fair Housing Actions including organization, staffing, resources, education, outreach, advocacy, monitoring and compliance, and ongoing Analysis of Impediments and Research
4. Where do we go from here – implementation of the plan

The FHTF has worked with HRC to amend our ordinance to explicitly include fair housing and the categories of protected classes. The FHTF and HRC have worked together to set-up a fair housing discrimination complaint process.

The FHTF has created a civil rights checklist for the City especially in housing programs.

This Action Plan is meant to be a living document, to carry forward these activities as well as meet new challenges. Henry asked for a formal endorsement from the HRC. The FHTF needs to go to the Mayor and hopes HRC reps will attend as well. They plan to ask the Mayor to create a body to support this work, providing staff support and to also address the lack of capacity within the City.

HRC members had questions:

- ✓ Has the FHTF worked with other communities? Yes, this also involves the Metro West Consortium.
- ✓ Can we quantify the numbers? Yes, they are in the audit results in the appendix. Some of the paired testing provided the most descriptive answers.
- ✓ What happened to the Real Estate people who discriminated? These were not enforcement audits. These were sponsored by the City so the tests were intentionally set-up so the City would not be a complainant. The identities of the Real Estate agencies were not given to the FHTF or the City. However, one of the FHTF outreach programs has been to work with Real Estate agencies and show them the discrimination as well as teach them how to prevent it. The Great Boston Fair Housing Center conducted the paired testing.

Henry stated that after they received the first audit back, the Mayor convened a meeting of all major realtors. By the end of the meeting the FHTF got a commitment that they'd participate in the training of their staff. The goal was creating an atmosphere where all could become collaborators in this process.

Marianne asked how soon they will need our endorsement and Henry said by the middle of September. HRC thanked Henry and Trisha for their time and presentation.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

Due to the presentation, Committee Reports were kept brief and no reports were given tonight for Membership, Fair Housing, Education, Communications, MAHRC, Newton Clergy Association

### **Program:**

Brenda reported that they are considering a program on bullying and the internet. Professor Englander from Bridgewater State College does a lot of work on this. There is also a Mass. Aggression Reduction Center (MARC) and all middle school teachers are trained. Bev mentioned that many agencies have been addressing this subject: the Youth Commission, Police Department, Project Interface, and Newton Community Service Center's Teen Reach Program. Hence we should collaborate with them and build on what they are doing.

### **NEW/OLD BUSINESS:**

- There was a little more discussion on the FHTF presentation and we'll defer our endorsement until the September HRC meeting.
- Jane Brown was thanked for hosting the June pot luck dinner and discussion of issues.

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

**Next meeting: Wednesday September 10, 2008 at 7:30pm at the City Hall cafeteria.**

Respectfully submitted, Beverly Droz, HRC staff director