

**Human Rights Commission**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**September 10, 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, Sona Petrossian, Susan Thomas

Commissioner absent/regrets:

Advisory Council Members present: Lt. Bruce Apotheker, Homer Franck, Sam Glass, Carleton Merrill, Viviane Planine, Joan Rubin

Advisory Council Members absent/regrets: Ann Capoccia, Dianne Chilingirian, Nazik Kazimi, Carol Y. Kelley,  
Norman Lazarus, Matt McBride, Myrna Offen, David Rosen, Sharon O. Stout, Frank Wolpe

Students present: Julijana Englander

Students regrets: Ali Zaidi

Staff present: Beverly Droz

Guests: Susan (Suzy) Rosenthal

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**The meeting opened** at 7:30 pm

Everyone was welcomed and introductions were made around the room.

**The minutes** of the July 9, 2008 meeting were approved with note that FHIP be spelled out, Fair Housing Initiative Program.

**School Updates:**

**NNHS** - Julijana reported that since school has just started, they are starting the process of establishing dates of events, programs, and what issues they will be addressing. NNHS is under construction.

**NSHS** - Viviana also noted that with the start of school, everything is in the planning stages.

**Hate Crimes/Incidents**

Lt. Bruce Apotheker reported on 2 items:

- An incident at MacDonald's where a young white male said racial slurs to a customer in front of him, who at first ignored the young man. Then the young man threatened the other man, and ended up being charged with a civil rights violation.
- An employer let an employee go. The employee took the key and later left slur messages on the phone machine. The Police are investigating.

**Fair Housing Task Force:**

Sheila briefly reviewed last month's Fair Housing Task Force (FHTF) presentation by Henry Korman, FHTF Chair, and Trisha Guditz, Housing Office Director. (Refer to the July 9 minutes for full information). She reviewed the Fair Housing Action Plan and its general elements and recommendations: education and outreach, advocacy, complaint process and monitoring of compliance. As noted at the July meeting, the FHTF is seeking endorsement of its Action Plan from stakeholders like the HRC and then they will meet with the Mayor.

Marianne opened it up for discussion but there was little. Members had received the Action Plan by email before the July meeting, and by hard copy at the meeting. They had asked many questions of Henry Korman at that meeting and were impressed and satisfied by the thoroughness of the plan.

**A motion for the HRC to endorse the Fair Housing Action Plan was made by Peter, Jane seconded it and the motion passed unanimously.**

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**Membership:**

Muriel welcomed Suzy Rosenthal and mentioned that Bev had submitted a listing to the Newton TAB to publicize our meetings and remind residents that they are welcome to attend. Bev noted that Armando Rossi had notified her that he needs to go off the HRC Advisory Council at this point in time due to personal reasons.

**Fair Housing:**

Sheila reported on a fair housing discrimination complaint that she spent time on during the summer. It involves a person with disabilities. There was an initial process of fact finding, and meeting with the complainant. Sheila could not find a link between the action of the housing provider and the disability of the client. Therefore it boiled down to a landlord/tenant issue, and the complainant was notified accordingly.

Bev thanked Sheila on behalf of the HRC for the considerable amount of her time and help on this case.

**Programs:**

Brenda reported that they are concentrating on a program on bullying and the internet. Lt. Apotheker spoke to the issues the Police see. Research shows that the bullying actions of a star student are often overlooked. It was noted the schools are working on this issue and they have recently received the \$6 million, 4-year "Safe Schools/Healthy Students" Grant. Bev suggested that HRC collaborate with the many agencies addressing this subject.

Jane said an Israeli Palestinian program will be addressed by a sub-committee willing to work on it.

Lt. Apotheker again mentioned Rachel's Challenge and suggested the HRC urge the Newton Public School to take it up.

**Education:**

Sona has been in touch with the high school principals to nominate 2 students per school for the upcoming December award ceremony, and to appoint student reps to the HRC. The committee plans to enlarge the spring Days of Remembrance exhibit to include Native Americans.

Viviana has spoken with housemasters and wonders if we can give some credit to the students for attending HRC meetings. Sona will call to inquire more about it.

**Communications:** No report at this time.

**MAHRC:**

Peter reported the Mass. Human Rights Committee is hosting an all-day roundtable on September 18 in Hyannis. The morning will be spent discussing with Mass. Commission Against Discrimination how communities can work cooperatively and more efficiently with MCAD. The afternoon will focus on immigration issues.

**Clergy:**

Sam noted there is no Newton Clergy Association meeting until October 16.

**HRC Annual Award:**

Judy reported our event is scheduled for Thursday, December 4 from 7 to 9pm at the Newton Senior Center. The award recipients are Doris Tennant and Ellen Lubell of Tennant Lubell LLC in Newton for their long-term pro-bono work on behalf of representation of Guantanamo prisoners. As noted, several high school students will be selected as recipients. We thanked Judy for her early organization of this important event.

**NEW/OLD BUSINESS:**

- Peter announced an event on 12/9/08 with John Shattuck at the Kennedy Museum and Jane Mayer, author of "The Dark Side" about the erosion of civil liberties.
- It was noted that HRC member Sam Glass is an annual judge for the "Profile in Courage" Award!
- Marianne reminded HRC that our budget of \$850 was not cut but we need to plan how it will be spent.
- Marianne said that at the June meeting, it was discussed to have an additional "Retreat" meeting. This will be discussed at the next Commissioners' meeting which is Sept. 23 at 7pm here at City Hall.

**The meeting was adjourned at 8:45pm.**

**Next meeting: Tuesday October 7, 2008 at 7:30pm at the City Hall cafeteria.**

(Note change to Tuesday due to Jewish Holidays & now scheduled for 7:00-8:30pm due to Presidential candidates debate.)

Respectfully submitted, Beverly Droz, HRC staff director