

Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes
December 12, 2007
7:30 PM in the Newton City Hall cafeteria

Attendance:

Commissioners present: Jane Brown, Peter Brown, Muriel Esdale, Marianne Ferguson . Chairperson, Judy Fischbach, Brenda Krasnow, Sheila Mondschein, Sona Petrossian, Susan Thomas

Commissioner absent/regrets: none

Advisory Council Members present: Lt. Bruce Apotheker, Dianne Chilingirian, Sam Glass, Nazik Kazimi, Carol Y. Kelley, Myrna Offen, Viviane Planine, David Rosen, Armando Rossi, Sharon O. Stout

Advisory Council Members absent/regrets: Ann Capoccia, Marcia Cruz Redding, Norman Lazarus, Matt McBride, Carleton Merrill, Joan Rubin

Students present: Julijana Englander, David Fisher, Ali Zaidi

Students regrets: Isaac Zarsky

Staff present: Beverly Droz

Guests: Homer Franck, Paul Jones, Frank Wolpe

The meeting opened at 7:35 pm, chaired by Marianne Ferguson.
Everyone was welcomed and introductions were made around the room.

The minutes of the Nov 14, 2007 meeting were approved and accepted.

School Updates:

Newton South High School:

David Fischer reported Saturday was Athletes Serving Community day and the 15th annual TBGLAD Day is 12/19. The STAND group sponsored the Darfur FAST through 12/5/07 and raised \$1,000. The Darfur Vigil in Newton Centre on 12/13/07 was moved into the Lutheran Church due to bad weather. David has the Save Darfur lawn signs with him so members can take them tonight.

Viviana Planine reported that the 12/20/07 Project Presidential Debate allows students to research and act the role of presidential candidates in a debate forum.

Newton North High School:

Julijana Englander reported that the Human Rights Coalition recently met. Their TBGLAD Day is also next week. This Friday the students involved in the Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) program will be going to the middle schools to run the leadership program. They have a bulletin board to promote December as Human Rights month, thereby providing information about many issues and the opportunity for involvement. They are brainstorming about how they may be able to help with MLK day.

Hate Crimes:

Lt. Apotheker reported that there was a bomb scare at NNHS today so the school was closed. There had been an envelope taped to the door with a message inside. The Police investigation is on-going. For this year 2007 Newton had 8 hate incidents, not bad for a city of our size. He reported it broke down as follows: 5 anti-semantic, 2 anti-gay, and one anti-white. He continues to keep Bev notified when anything happens.

Treasurer report:

The report was printed on the back of the agenda. Bev reported that HRC expenses to date are \$328.98. The balance in the HRC 07-08 Fiscal Year account is \$521.02. The HRC revolving account still stands at \$493.62. Sona said HRC has talked about the need for a bulletin board in City Hall and a portable microphone but the cost is high. Judy reported that she and Susan had investigated the microphone but found that the %aike+has to be compatible with a system, and that\$ the problem. Systems vary in different locations.

Old/New Business:

Paul Jones, a former student representative to HRC from NNHS, has traveled to various places during his college years. He wants to form a group called the %Bro-Active Alliance+to promote social awareness through community service and community building activities. The group would meet every two months and choose a

topic on which to focus. For January it could be hate speech and the power of language. He wants to get people together to go to parks and subways to erase graffiti. At the end of each month he would host a dialogue.

Lt Apotheker said there is nothing on the Police radar about graffiti but if anyone finds graffiti - please don't erase it. The Police need to be notified to photograph and document the graffiti.

Much of what the Alliance wants is parallel to what HRC wants. HRC members asked how Paul plans to publicize his group. Paul said by word of mouth. Frank said it is a concept looking for a project. There was brief discussion that HRC is happy to be supportive and we thanked Paul for coming to tell HRC about his ideas.

Awards Committee:

The 23rd annual Human Rights Awards was **November 29** at 7pm and held again at the Newton Senior Center. The honoree was Dr Howard Wishnie. Award Certificates were handed out to Dr Wishnie and 4 student awardees, 3 of which are HRC student Advisory members. We again congratulated Julijana, Ali and David. The fourth student is Katie Sanders, who is on the Youth Commission. There was discussion about minimal coverage of the event in the TAB although they did run a nice photo of the awardees.

Advisory Council: Myrna Offen and Nazik Kazimi are co-chairs and Sam will help out.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Membership: Muriel welcomed the guests but said there was no news to report.

Fair Housing:

Sheila reported that the Fair Housing Task Force expects to announce the housing discrimination complaint process soon. They are also completing a Fair Housing Action Plan for the City which outlines steps to be taken. They are exploring how to become a more permanent body.

Program:

Brenda reported that the November program was good (see Nov. 07 minutes for details) and they would like to meet again with Father Cuenin to discuss further collaborations, perhaps around the %Seeds of Peace+program. Susan reminded all that HRC owns the Encounter Point film. We paid for a onetime large group use. Two groups have contacted Bev to show the film but we are recommending for them to contact the producer company to arrange it. We can lend the film to individuals showing it in their homes.

Education:

Sona reported that at the Mayor's Press Conference on Dec. 3 he announced that December is Human Rights month and read a proclamation. Sona, Jane, Bev, Dr. Wishnie and Marvin Miller were there and Dr. Wishnie had erected his tall Darfur poster behind the Mayor.

MAHRC: Peter reported they last met in November and that the next meeting is this Friday.

Multi-Cultural Groups: No report

Clergy Association:

Sam attended the Clergy meeting with the HRC brochures and Darfur signs. Reverend Haywood of Myrtle Baptist announced his retirement. Sam reminded all that MLK day is January 21 and will be held at 2nd Church. April 2008 is the 40th anniversary of the death of MLK. There was discussion of ideas, similar to what was reported on in the November minutes.

OTHER BUSINESS

Holiday Gift Drive:

Bev had emailed all about her Department's Holiday Gift Drive to provide toys to the children of 180 families in need here in Newton, all of whom are being helped by her Department's Community Social Worker. Sharon reported that the Kiwanis club just voted to give \$360 to the Holiday Gift Drive.

Brenda mentioned a Christmas in the City program in Boston that gives toys to all children in shelters.

Susan suggested that Marcia's Multi-Cultural committee might be interested to hook up with %dERvoices+.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40pm.

Next meeting: Wednesday January 9, 2007 at 7:30pm in the City Hall cafeteria.