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Belmont Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, April 5, 2018
Belmont Town Hall, Conference Room One

The meeting was called to order at 7:08 p.m.

HRC Members in attendance: Carl Brauer, minute taker, Katya Gajdos, Sandi Gubin, Seneca Hart, Anthony Moroso, Chair, Paul Solomon, and Fran Yuan.

Also present: Liaisons: Captain J. Peter Hoerr, Belmont Police Department; Kathryn Bonfiglio, Belmont Against Racism; Patrice Garvin, Town Administrator

Patrice Garvin said that she was in the process of visiting all Town committees. She is new to Belmont and she wants to become familiar with the Town. She said that she had an open-door policy and she welcomes people to visit her and bring problems and questions to her attention.

Tony pointed out that the March meeting was cancelled because we lacked a quorum. Therefore, the phone line and note-taking responsibilities had been modified. Seneca would cover the phone for March and April. Carl would cover the phone in May but he was asked to take minute's today because Seneca had to be a little late.

The draft minutes of the February meeting were amended with a couple corrections and were approved by the Commission. There were no minutes for March because there had been no meeting. Seneca reported that there had been no significant phone or e-mail messages in March.

Tony reported that two BHS students had submitted applications to become members or liaisons to the Commission. One of the applicants was a freshman and the other was a junior. While the Selectmen appoint people to the Commission it has not appointed liaisons.

Tony reported that he had been accepted to an accelerated degree program at Suffolk Law School. That was his good news. The bad news was that he would have to resign from the Commission. Tony can chair the May 3 meeting but no meetings after that. His classes begin at the end of May and meet on week-nights. Members of the Commission congratulated Tony on his admission to his first-choice school. They thanked him for his outstanding service as chairman.

Tony pointed out that someone else would need to step up as chairman. All members demurred for various reasons. Carl was reluctant because of the ministerial burdens of the position. He said he would be looking to recruit some new people to the Commission, including possibly a new chairman. He pointed out that both Barbara and Tony had been fairly new members when they were elected chairman.

Katya attended the Global Cinema Film Festival that was held in March, at which she facilitated discussion. She reported that attendance was modest but that the films were excellent and very powerful. The festival's organizer, Raouf Jacob, is from Sierra Leone.

Fran reported on the talk that Gish Jen had given in the Assembly Room of the Belmont Public Library on February 6. HRC helped sponsor this event, which was extremely well attended by a diverse audience. It was standing room only and there was hardly any of that. Jen had donated copies of her most recent book to teachers. It is called "The Girl at the Baggage Claim: Explaining the East-West Culture Gap." Jen's interesting and good humored comments stimulated a good discussion.

Kathryn reported on multiple events that have taken place or will take place soon. They included the International Valentine's Celebration, which was held at the Belmont Public Library; "We Are Jews of Breslau," a Holocaust Remembrance Day Film to be shown at Beth El Temple Center, on April 8; "Interrupting Our Bias," a workshop and concert with "Alphabet Rockers" at First Church in Belmont, on April 8; "Belmont Speaks: Exploring Local Findings on Mental Health and Racial Equity," April 12; the "March for Our Lives," a student-organized march on March 21; a conference, "Anti-Racism Organizing in the Suburbs," which will be held at First United Methodist Church in Melrose, on April 28; and the March for Peace, in its 22nd year, which will be held on Mother's Day on May 13.

Seneca spoke about two events at Belmont High: The March For Our Lives, one of the many student-organized responses to the recent school shootings in Parkland, Florida; and Diversity Day at Belmont High School, which featured the students of Black in Belmont. She thought it was the best Diversity Day she had attended.

In response to a prior request from the Commission, Captain J. Peter Hoerr brought an unloaded AR-15 to the meeting and discussed how it worked. He also brought bullets from a pistol and from an assault weapon. He explained why it is useful for police to have assault weapons at their disposal. There was a discussion about gun laws and regulations.

Tony noted the sad news that former Selectmen Bill Skelley had died. Bill had been supportive of the Human Rights Commission in its early years.

Sandi presented a couple logos for the Commission that her mother, graphic designer, had sketched which were favorably received. She agreed to discuss developing one of the logos further with her mother.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM.

The next meeting of the Commission will be on May 3, 2018.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carl Brauer