

**Belmont Human Rights Commission***WR* ~~DRAFT~~ **Minutes****November 4, 2004**

The meeting was called to order by Interim Chair William Rudman. Present: Barry, Bannon, Feins, Reynolds, Shestakofsky, Toureilles, Witten, Yuan. Also present: Selectman Paul Solomon. Absent: Heron.

**Next scheduled meetings: November 15, 2004 at 7 PM;  
December 1, 2004 at 7 PM.**

**1. Resignation of Bill McCants**

In a letter to Selectman Paul Solomon dated October 20, 2004, member Bill McCants tendered his resignation from the Commission. He expressed concern about the communication at meetings. Members discussed the need to work toward a common purpose and to handle disagreements without accumulating new "baggage." The guidelines developed during the October 18 meeting address these points directly. Selectman Solomon pointed out that the Commission's membership is a microcosm of the Town, and the process of learning to work together—in both—will take time.

**2. Possible replacement member**

Dr Solomon asked the Commission to discuss whether we want a new eleventh member to be appointed. Committees are said to go through three stages: "forming, storming, and norming." This group is certainly into the middle stage. Dr. Solomon said he was inclined to set this aside unless or until: a) the Commission identifies a constituency that needs representing; or b) a stellar candidate comes forward. It was agreed to take no action for now.

**3. Minutes of October 18 meeting**

The minutes of the October 18, 2004 meeting were read and approved as drafted. The taking of minutes will continue to rotate among members. Procedures regarding minutes were clarified:

- The taker of minutes is asked to label the minutes as a DRAFT initially;
- The draft should be e-mailed to the (interim) chair and Dr. Solomon;
- The (interim) chair will edit as needed and distribute to members for review ahead of the next meeting;
- Once approved by the members, the DRAFT label will be removed and the APPROVED minutes will be sent to Sandra Curro.

**4. E-mail from Diane McLeod to Interim Chair Rudman**

Bill Rudman raised a question about an e-mail he had received from Diane McLeod of the MA Association of Human Rights

Commissions. Steve Shestakofsky explained that Diane circulates information on many events to a wide e-mailing group. There was agreement that the HRC needs to stay clear of partisan political issues, especially those outside Belmont.

**5. Publicity for HRC**

**6. Possible response to comments**

These two items were discussed jointly. The Belmont Citizen Herald of November 4 reported comments by one of the candidates for the Board of Selectmen questioning the wisdom of the BOS appointing a the Human Rights Commission (rather than retaining the functions themselves). The comments suggested a possible need for either publicity about who we are/what we are doing or a direct response in the newspaper. However, review of the full transcript produced a consensus that no immediate response was needed. After the election (November 15), the HRC will invite the new Selectman to come to our next meeting.

More generally, there was a suggestion that the HRC try to establish a regular column in the Citizen Herald. Dr. Solomon encouraged this and thinks editor Linda Pinkow will be very receptive to the idea. But we are not ready to start this yet.

**7. Selection of a permanent Chair**

This item was tabled until after the first of the year.

**8. Survey process**

Regarding review of the survey, Sandra Curro suggested that we send the draft survey, when ready, to the Selectmen for review. Dr. Solomon indicated the BOS did not need to approve the survey but would be glad to give their input on it. Then it will be distributed with the light bills. Constraints on the size of the light bill mailing insert need to be checked.

**9. Survey content**

Since the last meeting, Bev Whitten and Doug Reynolds had done considerable research on other surveys about diversity and had put together an extensive draft based on other examples combined with questions recommended by the members. The draft was discussed in detail.

The HRC intends to conduct focus groups after the survey effort. It was pointed out, however, that with no budget, it will be difficult to do the data entry and analysis of the survey data. The focus groups will also be challenging with no budget.

Judie Feins will assist in revising the survey and shortening it. There were suggestions to enlist the BHS Diversity and Tolerance Club in developing a separate version for teens and also to make a

special version for non-residents working or going to school in Belmont.

**10. Other old business**

- a. **Further training**—A question was raised about whether we need further training. There was general agreement that we probably do but that we need to move the survey work forward first.
- b. **Scheduling of future meetings**—Members were asked again to e-mail Bill Rudman with the days of the month that they are not available to meet on a monthly basis (for example, always have another meeting the fourth Thursday of the month).