

Approved
APR NR

**Belmont Human Rights Commission
Minutes
December 1, 2004**

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

**Next scheduled meetings: December 15, 2004 at 7 PM;
January 5, 2005 at 7 PM.**

1. Further from Town Counsel; Scope of Commission's Work.

Selectman Paul Solomon shared with the meeting the additional response from Town Counsel regarding the scope of the Commission's charge. The response clarified Town Counsel's earlier opinion regarding the Commission's charge. Members discussed the particular suggestion in the opinion that the ability of the HRC to conduct investigations could be clarified through a town by-law, adopted by town meeting. After some discussion, it was the sense of the meeting that it was premature to consider such a by-law. Commission members felt that there is a great deal of work yet to be done simply to get the Commission up and running, including consideration and potential action on the following:

- Internal rule making for the workings of the Commission
- Public relations efforts to inform the community about the Commission
- Development of resources for referrals and communications in the community
- Training of Commission members in conducting and participating in activities encompassed by all elements of the Commission's charge.

In short, the consensus was that: [1] the Commission's charge should stay in place; [2] the Commission needs to continue to establish itself and begin its work; and [3] the Commission will use its best judgment about handling any complaints that arise. The Commission would be reluctant to take on any investigation at this early stage of development and the lack of a budget and other resources for the Commission's work. Selectman Solomon undertook to seek clarification from Town Counsel regarding any mediation activities of the Commission.

2. Further Discussion of Work to be Done by Commission.

The meeting continued to discuss work to be done by the Commission over the near term. The following were suggested for getting the word out about the Commission and for connecting with key stakeholders:

- Develop a brochure (Fran Yuan volunteered to do a first draft);

- Prepare materials for the town website;
- Develop procedures for responding to complaints, so that the Commission is ready if a complaint is presented (Steve Shestakofsky volunteered to investigate what other HRC's have developed for procedures); and
- Invite the Belmont Police Department to name a liaison to the Commission (Steve Shestakofsky volunteered to contact Chief O'Malley about this).

3. Minutes of November 15 meeting.

The minutes of the November 15, 2004 meeting were read and approved as drafted.

4. Scheduling Officer.

Bill Rudman reported on his survey of Commission members about establishing a regular meeting night. The results did not produce any good choices that would allow all members to regularly attend. Bill suggested that the Commission continue to establish meeting dates ad hoc, and he volunteered to assume the duties of Scheduling Officer for those purposes. His offer was quickly accepted by the meeting.

5. Election of Chair of the Commission.

The meeting agreed to consider and vote on the selection of a Chair at its meeting of January 5, 2005.

6. Survey Update

Selectman Solomon shared some observations and those of Jennifer Page concerning the Vision 21 Community Survey. Discussion ensued regarding the proposed survey for the HRC. The survey subcommittee had done some more work, and raised questions about [1] whether this should be the first effort of the Commission, and [2] can it be either helpful or "scientific" if it is very limited in scope? After lengthy discussion, it was the sense of the meeting that the survey could be used as a first message to the community, and that we should try to do it in a less formal way in order to introduce the HRC and invite dialogue about diversity and inclusion.

The survey subcommittee undertook to draft a short, 3-question survey and report to the next meeting. Art Heron volunteered to investigate whether the survey could be included in the census mailing in January. He also volunteered to investigate obtaining a phone number for the HRC and how that would be answered or checked for messages. Other ideas for distributing the survey and increasing the response rate included sending it to the newspaper, posting it on the town website, and circulating it at

Belmont High School. This discussion will be continued at the next meeting.

7. Adjournment; Food for next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned with a reminder that members should bring snack foods to share at the next meeting on December 15th.

Respectfully submitted,
Doug Reynolds

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