

Belmont Human Rights Commission  
Belmont Town Hall  
December 6, 2007  
Meeting Minutes

Members present: Laurie Graham (Chair), Lisa Bernt, Nan Donald, Camille Sarrouf, Fran Yuan.

Members absent: Janet Cudmore-Boswell, Judie Feins, Trish Lohmar, Roz Kabrhel, Moez Rawji, Connie Williams.

Liaisons present: Selectman Paul Solomon; Captain. Peter Hoerr ( Belmont Police Dept.); Hildy Dvorak (Council on Aging), Dan Richards,( Belmont High School)

The meeting began at 7:18 p.m.

1. Minutes of November 1, 2007, meeting: approved without need for amendment.
2. Secretary schedule: It was decided that the role of secretary will be on a rolling basis by last name. Lisa Bernt took the meeting minutes last month and Nan Donald was selected for this month.
3. Phone line: No messages since the last meeting. Instructions distributed for telephone monitoring. Nan Donald will monitor the phone for December.
4. Discussion of November 13th meeting/where do we go from here: Seven guests and six members of the Human Rights Commission attended the November meeting. Public participation was lighter than hoped for, but those that did attend were very spirited. The recent distribution to three selectmen and at least two other residents of Belmont of materials containing an anti-Islamic bias highlight the need for a Human Rights Commission. The general consensus was to wait until more members of the Human Rights Commission and the public were present for further discussion of where to go from here in terms of replacing the No Place for Hate program or other new initiatives, although there was some brief discussion about the moving personal testimony given about the Armenian genocide at the September Human Rights Commission and Selectman's Meetings, and how it was a powerful way to reach people and understand historical pain.
5. Discussion of music/cultural/open-house event: The Armenian musical group Arev is still interested in performing at a musical/multi-cultural event. There was a brief discussion of both possible times to hold the event, as well as other types of musical groups to consider. Again, more definitive discussion was postponed due to the sparse attendance. Trish Lohmar, Fran Yuan, Laurie Graham and Nan Donald have all agreed to be on a subcommittee to plan this event. Fran will contact Arev for specific dates.
6. Discussion co-sponsorship of the Martin Luther King breakfast: The Human Rights Commission voted to co-sponsor Belmont 's 14th annual MLK breakfast. The keynote speaker this year will be WGBH's Basic Black host Kim McLarin, who wrote "Jump: A Novel at the Sun: A Novel." She is expected to address the language of race. Commission members will be asked to assist with publicity, etc as the date draws closer.
7. Race and Place Dialogue: The Commission discussed a proposal by the Fair Housing Center of Boston to partner with the Town of Belmont Library and other interested groups to hold a four-part dialogue series on why communities became-and still remain-segregated, utilizing the three part PBS series "RACE-The Power of an Illusion". Although this dialogue series sounds like a good idea, Commission members expressed concern about over-extending the Commission. The

consensus was that it was best to hold off on such an endeavor, although Fran Yuan will talk to Aviva Rothman-Shore of the Fair Housing Center to discuss this further.

8. Police/Community Dialogue: Next Steps?: There was further discussion of Police and Community Forum and a summary of the forum was distributed. Belmont Police Chief Richard J. McLaughlin will attend the next HRC meeting in January, so the HRC will discuss next steps to take in the Police and Community dialogue at that time.

9. Liaison Reports: Dan Richards reported that planning is underway for Diversity Week at the High School, although at this point, nothing is confirmed. Hildy Dvorak told the Commission that the Council on Aging is very busy with plans for the new Senior Center , and concerns about where the center will be housed for the next year and a half, before the new one is expected to be completed. According to Captain Peter Hoerr , the Belmont Police Department had no new concerns to report

10 Resource materials: Lisa Bernt introduced a binder of information re Fair Housing legal issues that she has compiled. The plan is to make it available at the Public Library.

Meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.  
Draft minutes submitted by Nan Donald.