

Belmont Human Rights Commission
Belmont Town Hall
February 1, 2007

Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Lisa Bernt, Judie Feins, Laurie Graham, Roz Kabrhel, Trish Lohmar, Moez Rawji, Donna Ruvolo, Connie Williams, Fran Yuan (Chair)

Members Absent: Cynthia Bannon, Janet Cudmore-Boswell, Cheryl Morrissey

Guests and Liaisons Present: Kathryn Bonfiglio (BAR), Lt. Peter Hoerr (Belmont Police), Alane Janulewicz (Chenery Middle School)

The meeting began at 7:10 p.m.

1. Introduction of all members and liaisons, with background and other town groups/commission to which they belong.

2. New Members- Fran explained that Cynthia Bannon stepped down from the Commission due to ongoing health issues and Trish Lohmar was appointed, by the BOS, in her place. Discussion of way to show appreciation for Cynthia's work as well as that of Bill Rudman and others who are no longer on the Commission. Judie made motion that we ask the BOS to present a certificate of thanks to Cynthia at April Town Meeting. Connie suggested we incorporate this as a yearly policy.

3. Upcoming Events -

Feb 7th , 5:30 pm @ Suffolk Law School, "Pipeline to Public Service". Launch of program aimed at developing generation of leaders of color and prepare them to participate in politics at many levels.

Feb 26th @ CMS, Cedric Jennings: "A Journey in the Unseen" as part of Diversity Week at the BHS.

March 10th, 7:30 pm. @ First Church, "ReneGAYdes", to support BAGLY. Co-sponsored by Belmont Gay Straight Alliance Committee, First Church in Belmont, and Beth-El Temple Center.

March 11th, 3 - 5 pm. "Multicultural Event" @ CMS, cosponsored by BAR and METCO group.

April 26th, 7- 9 p.m. Fair Housing event (see below)

4. Phone Line - No calls in January, Cheryl said at last meeting that she would cover February; Fran will call to confirm.

5. Minutes - Approved as amended.

6. Brochures/Website -

Fran passed around brochures; discussion of what the light bill and newsletter procedure is. BHRC can include some document in the June light bill. Discussion of wording of brochure with motion passed to change "complaint process" to "incident procedure". Motion passed to accept donation from resident to pay for insert, in June. Commission members will discuss form of insert at a later date. Fran has taken brochures to BPL and Town Clerk's office.

Fran has spoken with Sandra Curro at BOS office about our web-site. We can send documents such as brochure, Incident procedure, Fair Housing docs to be posted. Sandra suggested that once we have posted several items that she can put a notice on the "rolling announcements" on town home web-page.

7. No Place for Hate - Fran has spoken with BHS (Dan Richards) about hanging NPFH signs at school on doors and will speak with CMS administration to see about same.
8. Mediation Training - Fran spoke with Mass Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD) re: negotiation skills/mediation training for the BHRC. There is no training available there but question will be on the agenda for the next MHRC meeting. Discussion ensued regarding the issue of mediation:
Moez raised issue of whether there is a need for mediation as the BHRC has not been called upon to perform this function.
Connie said we need to make sure we are responsive to calls before the issue of mediation is raised.
Lisa said that it did no harm for Fran to see how other HRCs handle the issue.
Roz said that the most the BHRC can do is to be a referral for general resources without being seen as "endorsing" any specific ones.
Fran said it would be good to have a resource list; Liz and Roz agreed to work on defining a list of resource/referral categories.
9. Annual Report - report is due February 12th, Fran asked that Commission members review and provide input to her via email.
10. Meeting Format - Discussion of meeting format issues which were raised originally at December meeting:
Moez expressed his belief that the meetings are not reaching their full potential; he feels that we should be able to discuss ideas and not necessarily stick to agenda. [The] "criteria of the meeting should be the most important items, not just keeping with a rigid agenda."
Judie brought up issue of need for additional or longer meetings.
Connie said she "feels if we don't discuss issues [raised by speakers] at the time of the meeting then it is disrespectful to the speakers".
Fran said that after the December meeting she had changed the meeting format so that when there are speakers, we conduct business portion of the meeting and have the speakers speak at the last hour with time for questions after. She also said that "as we become more visible there might be more to talk about and need to go to 9:15 or 9:30." Fran will also disseminate as much information as possible ahead of time, including minutes and other information, as discussed at January meeting.
Moez raised issue of the style of the meeting; he "feel[s] that the chair has the lion share of any discussion. If people are passionate about something, let them speak, [we] need to allow time for discussion and action items".
Donna said that she didn't "feel that Fran discourages other from speaking".
Laurie said that she had been at both the December meeting (housing speaker) and the January meeting (mental health speaker) and found that the changed format allowed for ample time to ask questions.
11. Musical Event - Date has been moved (potentially) to May 6th at the CMS. Custodial services will cost \$150.00.
12. Fair Housing - Judie and Hildy Dvorak met with Aviva Shore-Rothman to discuss getting a speaker for Fair Housing Month discussion on April 26th. Perhaps work with Vision 21 to get an additional speaker. Discussion of other things to do beyond the April 26th meeting.
13. Regional Meeting - Fran and Judie attended a regional meeting re: a Municipal Budget Initiative with shared staffing for 3-4 towns to coordinate oversight of Fair/Equal Housing. If funding doesn't come through then the hope is that some of the initiative will continue. Newton is running training with HUD money; hope is that Belmont landlords and OCD (Office of Community Development) will attend. Moez suggested an article in the Belmont Citizen-Herald relating Newton's experiences; Donna stated that there needs to be a hook into what happens in Belmont with a Belmont focus. Peter suggested approaching Linda Pinkow (BCH editor) to see if paper

could do an article which might appear in several communities. Laurie will talk with Linda re: article.

14. Musical Event - further discussion of event. Fran raised idea of moving this to the Fall when we would not have so much competition for both calendar and physical space. Trish said she would help with program.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10.

Submitted by Laurie Graham, secretary du jour.