

RECEIVED  
TOWN CLERK  
BELMONT, MA

2016 FEB 10 AM 9:07



*Belmont Human Rights Commission*

---

**Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, January 7, 2016**  
**Belmont Town Hall**  
**Conference Room 1**

The following were in attendance:

**Members:** Darren Bouwmeester, Carl Brauer, Nan Donald, Mirela Duda, Sarah Jane Henman, Jirair Hovsepian, Paul Solomon and Barbara Watson.

**Liaisons:** Belmont High School: Jia Zhang; Belmont Against Racism: Kathryn Bonifiglio, June Roberts, Jonathan Jacoby, Belmont Police Department: Captain J. Peter Hoerr.

Absences: Fran Yuan

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

1. **Meeting minutes:** The December meeting minutes were adopted.

2. **Phone line and e-mail:**

Barbara Watson received an email message suggesting that the National Anthem be sung at the MLK breakfast. Doing so had not been planned, and has not been done in the past. The suggestion can be considered for future breakfasts.

Phone line and minute-taking assignments: January – Mirela, February – Sarah Jane

3. **Martin Luther King, Jr. Breakfast (Monday, January 18, 2016 from 8:45 – 11:00 a.m.)**

An update was presented. While press releases had been sent out and the event had been covered in the news section, Barbara asked if someone might be able to log into the local newspaper calendars (The Belmont Citizen Herald, The Belmontonian) to add the breakfast. Sara Jane volunteered to do so. Sarah Jane also reported the number of online registrations received to date.

The MLK program and other organizational issues were discussed, including:

- the order and duration of events – including the performances, speaker's presentations, the METCO pitch
- a motion was introduced by Barbara to include a recognition of service for Laurie Graham, School Committee Chair and past BHRC Chair, who will be leaving the School Committee at the end of the month. The motion was voted on and approved.

- opinions on the use of credit card readers for donations; should readers be circulated around the room, or used in a fixed location (requested by Kathryn; responses from Jirair, Barbara and June)

- a suggestion (Jirair) that audience members be given cards to write down questions for Senator Forry, or that a fixed microphone be provided for audience members to line up to ask their questions. It was noted (Nan) that the fixed microphone would exclude those less mobile. Both suggestions were left open for further consideration.

Additional discussions involved the performance by the BHS Quartet at the MLK Breakfast, including: the choice of musical pieces; their length; and whether donation envelopes should be collected during the performance.

#### **4. Program on Islam and the Muslim religion**

Kathryn discussed previous programs in Belmont, organized by BAR together with Muslim Community representatives. She offered her opinion that such an event may be appropriate at this time. She is awaiting a response from the Islamic Society to BAR's invitation to collaborate.

Jirair noted it would be important to invite both Sunni and Shiite representatives. Kathryn observed that a scholar should present the history and geography of the 2 parties, while Jonathan commented that the Shiite-Sunni divide might not be an issue in Massachusetts.

Barbara introduced a motion for BHRC to co-sponsor BAR's event. A vote was taken and the motion approved.

#### **5. Discussion of Investigation of Tamir Rice's Death**

Captain Hoerr provided a brief overview of the events leading up to Tamir Rice's death. He brought toy BB guns for examination, demonstrated some of the reported actions at the scene, presented the findings of the investigation, discussed BB pistol incidents in Belmont, and answered questions from HRC members.

Paul asked why Tamir's sister was handcuffed, as well as how many shots were fired and why. Barbara asked Captain Hoerr's opinion on what can be done to avoid cases like this. Jia asked what can be done to ensure that toy guns, including pellet guns, are not mistaken for real guns. The Captain responded that while manufacturers may not build toy guns like real ones, users can modify them to look realistic. Carl noted that police in a number of other countries do not carry guns. A conversation followed on Second Amendment rights. Darren asked the Captain for the takeaway from the Tamir Rice case. Captain Hoerr identified two points:

1) the need for police dispatchers to provide all the information they receive on an incident, so that officers have the best information when responding; 2) the pros and cons of teaching people what to do when approached by police officers.

#### **6. Liaison Reports**

Jia informed the Commission of increased interest among BHS students to work with the HRC, either as liaisons or as members, and the need to provide interested students with more information about the HRC.

## **7. Other Reports**

Carl reminded the members that local comedian Jimmy Tingle will be performing May 7, 2016 in a show at Belmont High School to benefit Bristol Cove, the Belmont Food Pantry and the METCO Support Fund. This event is a follow-up activity from the A Path Appears committee.

8. The next Commission meeting will be on Thursday, February 4, 2016 at 7 PM.
9. The meeting was adjourned at 8:42 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Mirela Duda