



**Belmont Human Rights Commission
Belmont Town Hall
April 1, 2010**

Members Present: Lisa Bernt (presiding), Fran Yuan (taking notes), Carl Brauer, Julie Cicalese, Nan Donald, Laura Panos

Members Absent: Connie Williams, Chuck Laverty, Paul Solomon
Liaisons Present: Capt. Peter Hoerr (BPD)

The meeting began at 7:10 p.m.

- Meeting minutes: The March meeting minutes were accepted unanimously as amended.
 - 2 Phone line: Lisa reported that there were no phone messages on the HRC phone line this month. Lisa volunteered to check messages April-May meeting, Nan from May- June meeting, and Julie from June – July.
 - 3 Census: Fran shared a Census flyer about Questionnaire Assistance Centers in Belmont. Help is provided at two locations that offer translation services in Armenian, French, and Italian. She will post in the library.
- Ethics training: Lisa informed us that all HRC members have completed the ethics training on-line.
- 6 Open meeting law: Julie attended the Opening Meeting Law meeting on Tuesday, March 30th. She reports that the information shared at that meeting will be posted on the town website. The new law will be effective as of July 1st. Julie reported on the top 10 changes and will email a copy to members.

Among some of them are:

- 48 hours prior to meeting, the meeting must be posted, this excludes Saturday.
- The chairperson is expected to have an agenda.
- The meeting date and agenda must be posted at Town Hall 48 hours in advance.
- The minutes of meetings should detail contents, including a summary of the meeting, decisions made, votes taken, and a list of documents presented.

- Members of town committees may not discuss issues in e-mails. Any discussion with a quorum present (on-line or off) would constitute a meeting.

The AG's office will put out an advisory on these changes. 30 slides were presented at the meeting

e Winchester Multicultural Network (WMN): Lisa reported that she is on WMN's email list and receives updates on their activities. The WMN is a private organization, not a governmental body like the HRC. They have very dedicated leaders and a half-time person 3 days a week. It was suggested that we might help to publicize their events in Belmont so our residents could take part. Carl brought up whether we should be doing what they do.

- 7 Leadership: Lisa informed the group that because of other commitments, she is not in the best position to act as a co-chair next year. She agreed that she could continue to attend the monthly MAHRC meetings if someone wanted to take leadership. Fran's term is up this year and she is thinking about returning. It was agreed we would discuss roles and interest at our next meeting.

Laura felt that attendance and commitment is important on the part of all HRC members. Fran said she reported attendance absences at more than three meetings in a row in the annual report. She asked if anyone thought it had been a problem this year as she didn't think so.

8. Events: We discussed the possibility of doing 1-2 events a year. Fran mentioned continuing to cosponsor with other groups and getting in on events that were already happening, such as author's nights at the library. Carl mentioned Jared Curhan from the Sloan School who is an expert on negotiations. Laura mentioned we could be involved at Belmont High School during diversity week. It was agreed that we would put the issue of events and programs on the agenda for the next meeting.
9. Articles: Laura said her article on credit checks on employees would be published in the Belmont Citizen Herald after elections are over. Julie agreed to research and write an article on bullying for the BCH.
10. Co-sponsorship: Fran reported that Kathryn Bonfiglio of Belmont against Racism had emailed several groups to help co-sponsor another presentation on bullying in the fall. Elizabeth Englander, who has spoken before in Belmont, would be invited to speak. She is from Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center at Bridgewater State College. Members voiced their interest in this.

Fran asked the HRC to be co-sponsor of the Freedom to Marry Ice Cream Social on Monday, May 17th. Members voted unanimously to co-sponsor the event.

Fran also reported on a recent Parents and Friends of Lesbian and Gays (PFLAG) study that demonstrates the importance of parental support to the mental health (depression, suicide rates) of gay and lesbian youth. She says that the group, Belmont Gay Straight Alliance Committee, plans to send the study report to clergy in Belmont. Lisa thought it was important not to interfere with the church, although information could be shared.

1 Liason Report: Capt. Peter Hoerr of the Belmont Police Department reported that one of the two non-white officers with the BPD is transferring to Cambridge. It may be because of the Quinn Bill which pays more money based on the educational level of officers. Belmont doesn't offer this benefit. As there is no exit interview done when officers leave, the real reason for this officer's departure is unknown.

He also reported that the Chief and Asst. Chief of Police in Belmont are non-union. The Captain is union. Julie and Laura questioned union members supervising other union members, which they were unaware could happen.

Capt. Hoerr asked for assistance with two different situations that came to the attention of the police:

- An Asian woman has been collecting returnable bottles and cans from recycling bins around town. The law forbids collecting these recyclables from residents' bins. Residents have complained about her and officers have spoken to her. She does not seem to understand English and is presumed to be Chinese. The police are reluctant to take legal action on this minor crime, but they have been having difficulty communicating. The police do not have translators they can use.

Fran offered to have a statement written in Chinese that could be given to the woman stating the problem her behavior presents and telling her to stop. She agreed to get this to Capt. Hoerr.

Lisa mentioned that there is available to police a list of statements in different languages so that non-English speakers can indicate what language they speak. She offered to get one for the BPD.

-Neighbors have complained about the noise coming from the church on Marlboro Street. This Haitian congregation has a week-long music celebration in June and this is what brings complaints. Nan lives on this street and agreed to speak to the leader of the church and try to come up with a solution between the church and the neighbors.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.