

**Belmont Human Rights Commission
Belmont Town Hall
September 10, 2009**

Meeting Notes

Members Present: Lisa Bernt, Carl Brauer, Julie Cicalese, Chuck Laverty, Laura Panos, Connie Williams, Fran Yuan

Members Absent: Nan Donald, Paul Solomon

Liaisons Present: Captain Peter Hoerr (Belmont Police Department), Dan Richards (Belmont High School)

The meeting began at 7:15 pm

- Lisa presided; Fran took meeting minutes. A quorum was present.
 - All members and liaisons introduced themselves. Two new members, Carl Brauer and Chuck Laverty, attended for the first time.
- 2 The June 4th meeting minutes were accepted as amended.
- Fran reported that one call was received on the HRC phone line. The caller reported erratic behavior on the part of her landlord, who lives in the house in which she is a tenant. She wanted to know her rights in case the landlord asked her to move out. Fran requested a copy of the Attorney General Guide to Landlord-Tenant Rights be sent to the caller.
- Fran agreed to follow up with caller to find out more about an incident in which the landlord shut off her water. Capt. Hoerr suggested it might be a Board of Health issue and a criminal offense.
- Carl agreed to answer the phone line until the October meeting, followed by Laura (November), Julie (December), and Chuck (January). Fran will email instructions for this duty.
- Fran reported on the commission's attendance at the Meet Belmont event in August.
 - Lisa reported that she attended the Mass. Assoc. of Human Rights Commissions (MAHRC) meetings this past year, which are generally held on the second Friday of the month in Medford (9:30-11:30 am). She invited others to rotate attendance. No one stepped forward for this.
- 6 Laura reported on our participation in the food drive (a One Book, One Belmont event), where she will transport donated food from the library to the food pantry.
- d Laura's article, 'Leaving Lawfully' about employment law which appeared today in the Belmont Citizen Herald, was discussed. We discussed different ways to gain publicity for the commission and connect with the community including writing more articles, using the town website to disseminate information and asking for email feedback, and

speaking to groups (such as at the Senior Center), doing a Q and A session about what's legal and what's not. Laura agreed to make a connection with the Senior Center.

- e Carl attended the MCAD training in July. He reported that he found the breakout sessions where he met other HRC commissioners the most interesting aspect of the day. Diane Wiltshire, the Belmont METCO Director, also attended. Fran and Julie will be attending a repeat of this training on September 24th.
- 10. Fran reported that Nancy Marsh of Maloney Properties contacted her. Nancy, a Belmont realtor, works with tenants at the new Waverly Woods property, which includes 40 affordable rental apartments. Nancy related some of the issues tenants were facing, such as getting along with neighbors and other issues that might be culture-related. Fran agreed to ask Nancy if she was interested in coming to a meeting to speak to the HRC.
- 11. Fran brought up the Gates-Crowley incident in Cambridge and what we might learn from this. Capt. Hoerr related his experiences in Belmont, where race/ethnicity might have been an issue. He pointed out that he and other police have encountered prejudice against police and described how this has put him in a difficult position. Chuck said he could see both sides of the situation described. Connie agreed that there was enough history on both sides when such interactions occur. She also said that Obama rewarded both sides for their bad behavior. Lisa proposed that we get a copy of the investigative report about the Cambridge incident once it is completed and available. She also pointed out that it was important to manage the message when such controversial incidents occur, to keep things from getting worse.
- 11. Fran reported that she was contacted by Laura Maslow-Armand of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, who wanted to speak to the HRC about what they do and the pro-bono services available to those with discrimination complaints. Fran will contact her to about her attendance at the October meeting.

1 LIASONS' REPORTS:

Capt. Hoerr explained the Citizens' Police Academy, an 8-week program that educates the community about what the police do. It is 3-hours a week on one night. It covers criminal law, forensics, 911 calls, and domestic violence. They have 22 people including seniors, students, but mostly adults. Also, a Ride Along can be arranged with Rich Santangelo.

Dan Richards reported about Diversity Week, to be held during the last week in February next year. Lisa suggested that the MCAD could come in during that week and talk about employment discrimination, especially wages and other issues that might affect high school students. Lisa agreed to contact Dan and possibly arrange a speaker if he is interested. Dan reported that the high school will have a Diversity newsletter send out by email, 1 highlighting events like Hispanic Week.

The meeting was adjourned at 8: 47 p.m.