

Belmont Human Rights Commission

September 8, 2005

Meeting Minutes

Present: HRC Members: C. Bannon, J. Feins, R. Gibson, C. Morrissey, M. Rawji, W. Rudman, D. Ruvolo, F. Yuan

Absent HRC Members: S. Shestakofsky, C. Williams

Liaisons: Kathryn Bonfiglio, Belmont Against Racism, Laurie Graham, Belmont Special Education Advisory Committee(BSEAC), Lt. Peter Hoerr, Belmont Police Dept. (BPD), Paul Solomon, Board of Selectmen

Guest: Jen Smith-Anti-defamation League(ADL) Observer: Anthony Oberdorfer

1. Minutes of August 4, 2005 meeting accepted unanimously
2. HRC informed that Garrett Barry, chairman, has resigned as Chairman as well as from the commission, effective immediately.
3. Nomination of new chair. Brief description of qualifications: 1) Should be someone who can attend most meetings 2) Bring the most people together 3) Devote the time necessary to achieve our aims. Fran Yuan was nominated and elected by unanimous vote.
4. Fran Yuan introduced Jen Smith of ADL. Belmont has signed on as part of the "NO PLACE FOR HATE" program. Ms. Smith was present to help guide us in meeting the necessary requirements for participation in this program, which include involvement in 3 separate activities in a calendar year aimed at encouraging tolerance, cooperation and understanding within the town. Ms. Smith explained the workings of the ADL and their beginning activities. They strive to be proactive as well as reactive in their programs.

Ms. Smith also mentioned an annual \$1000 matching grant program covering qualifying projects for which we would be eligible. This, she reminded us, is not just an HRC project but something the entire town is taking on and any eligible group can submit a project to apply for the matching grant, such as BAR, BPD or BSEAC.

In Belmont, we should attempt to identify the issues, what represents diversity in this town, what are its resources, gaps, assets and continuing issues. Using a 4 tiered pyramid, Ms. Smith indicated the different levels of hate starting with genocide, then discrimination, and ending with stereotyping, name calling, racist jokes, etc. This is the level at which she felt the HRC could be most effective. Community and educational activities and law enforcement projects are examples of programs that would fulfill our requirements for inclusion in the NO PLACE FOR HATE program. A few ideas suggested included a religious open house, an ethnic education program and a dialogue group.

Kathryn Bonfiglio of BAR spoke about a Hate Groups Forum they were sponsoring on September 22 to be held in the Selectmen's Office. She urged HRC to be a co-sponsor. All who are able should try to attend meeting scheduled for 7:30. If we co-sponsored, this could count as one of the three programs necessary for inclusion in NO PLACE FOR HATE program. Publicity must be done; getting cooperation from schools, churches and town newspaper is important for spreading our message.

A motion was made and seconded to become co-sponsors of the BAR Forum and include it as part of our programming for our NO PLACE FOR HATE participation.

Further suggestion was made to begin building an e-mail list of supporters to publicize and inform.

Ms. Smith left after her presentation and has volunteered to return at any time to help further our plans.

5. The subject of racial profiling was raised when traffic stops are made and tickets issued in town and in general. Lt. Hoerr reminded us that the police department is now keeping a record of every

incident that they are involved with including race and gender of parties involved. Discussion of subject might be put on agenda for a future meeting.

6. Mass. Assoc. of HRCs (MAHRC) meetings were discussed. Fran Yuan has been acting as liaison and attended the last meeting. Meetings take place on the second Friday of every month at the Medford City Hall from 9:30-11:00 a.m. The contacts made at these meetings are helpful since we meet our counterparts in area communities. Interaction provides ideas for programming and handling of difficult situations. Donna Ruvolo and Regie Gibson volunteered to attend some of the meetings, alternating with Fran.

7. The contact phone number we have been using through former member, Art Heron, is no longer available. The town administrator said we cannot have a designated phone unless we have investigative powers. Fran Yuan asked Paul Solomon to pursue this further with her.

8. Donna Ruvolo and Fran Yuan presented qualifications and descriptions for three groups who would be able to provide additional training in diversity issues for the HRC. They handed out a chart outlining specifics about these three organizations, which are VISIONS, Community Change, and the ADL. Specifics included a description of each group's Mission/Core Values, their processes, outcomes, and cost. After considerable discussion, pro and con, about each group, a vote was taken. VISIONS was selected to do our training. No dates were decided upon but Fran, Donna and Bill Rudman will talk with VISIONS. We hope to complete the training in the Fall. We have to find a date that most can attend. Fran will e-mail members for selection of dates.

9. All liaisons and visitors were asked to leave and the HRC went into executive Session.

10. Meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Cynthia Bannon