

**BELMONT HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**  
**MINUTES**

**March 2, 2006**

Members Present: F. Yuan (Chair), S. Shestakofsky (Vice-Chair), C. Bannon, J. Feins, R. Gibson, C. Morrissey, W. Rudman, D. Ruvolo, C. Williams.

Liaisons Present: L. Graham, H. Dvorak, Lt. P. Hoerr, K. Bonfiglio.

Minutes of February 6, 2006 unanimously accepted as amended.

Commission welcomed Ms. Dvorak, liaison for the Council on Aging.

S. Shestakofsky presented alternatives for the Commission's "Incident Report". It was decided to use the form that he developed with some minor changes in wording and order. It was noted that the form can always be amended if issues develop. Mr. Shestakofsky will present the form as revised at the next meeting.

It was suggested we give the Chair authority to keep tighter control of the meeting including raising hands for authorization to speak and more judicious use of language. Members agreed that how we express ourselves is very important and if problems arise, they need to be addressed ASAP. The Chair will periodically re-read the guidelines.

Priorities and co-sponsorship: There was a lengthy discussion on the issue of promoting agendas and protecting people and groups from discrimination. It was agreed that to educate about diversity is part of our Charge even if we cannot accomplish every possible goal. It was also agreed that we not merely be reactive, e.g., responding to the hate leaflets left on lawns, but that we need a rationale for acting in a proactive way. There was discussion of the survey and using the results to help determine where problems may lie. D. Ruvolo volunteered to work on it. It was noted that the survey, although somewhat flawed, is the closest thing that we have to a needs assessment. There was discussion about reluctance to be proactive and whether we have the responsibility to "push the envelope". An example was a possible speaker or panel concerning religion and the importance of choosing the correct speaker(s). It was agreed that we need to select the most pressing issues but also to ascertain from that group whether a problem exists and that we can not "stamp out" discriminatory feelings and have no basis for action if no illegal action results. In addition, it was suggested that we should not be promoting any particular viewpoint but rather dialogue, understanding, and accountability for behavior. It was also suggested that we can perhaps change attitudes and that our Charge comes from the Vision Statement to make Belmont a welcoming town.

The issue of deciding what to sponsor was discussed and it was agreed that we need extensive information as to the purpose and to the identity of the cosponsor and also that we can not engage in lobbying or politics, e.g., being for or against a Constitutional Convention on homosexual marriage.

The Chair brought up the issue of MAHRC networking and the need for members to present ideas. Ideas forwarded included how groups set priorities and knowing what other groups are doing. It was agreed that an evening meeting was preferable for most.

The issue of discrimination against families in the Uplands project was discussed. It was agreed that the Commission should obtain expert opinion before taking a position.

It was suggested that we put a time limit on presentations by liaison speakers due to the press of business.

The “International Event” proposal was discussed and it was agreed that we need to decide how to proceed soon – whether to continue to develop the idea, limit it to a narrower focus, or resolve that it is not the direction we want to go and that we also develop a road map for the events for the next year or two.

The Chair encouraged members to attend that METCO dinner on March 12, 2006.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Rudman