

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MEETING FEBRUARY 2, 2017
SENIOR/COMMUNITY CENTER

ATTENDANCE: Tom Getz, Kathleen Shaw, Sheila Trieff, Judy Lacroix, Margaret McQuillan, Peter Blaiwas, Caroline Walsh, Kat Preftes

GUESTS:

It was noted two members of the Commission were attending a meeting (Human Rights Advocacy) at City Hall regarding protesting current federal decisions and actions by the Trump administration and recommitting Newburyport as a welcoming and safe city.

A Presentation by Katie Nye, (a Newburyport resident) from the *Office for Refugees and Immigrants* was added to the top of the agenda at the beginning of the meeting.

PRESENTATION SUMMARY: Ms. Nye spoke to the current issues involving the needs of immigrants and refugees, including what the Executive Order banning immigrants and refugees has meant for both refugees and service providers. She shared resources and assistance provided to refugees, both documents and agencies, and shared information about sanctuary cities. She made several suggestions as to how we as a community can support refugees and immigrants:

Sheila suggested inviting MIRA (*Massachusetts Immigrant and Advocacy Coalition*) and ACLU representatives come to speak to the commission in the future.

Susan Viccaro, NPS Superintendent and school liaison to the HRC, spoke about the immigrant population in Newburyport and identified the Bresnahan School assistant principal Karina Mascia, who speaks Spanish and Portuguese, as an effective outreach person for our Brazilian families.

OLD BUSINESS

Approval of January minutes.

Update on new commissioner: Ahmer Ibrahim met with the Mayor, who forwarded his name to the City Council. Ahmer's name will be read at the next two council meetings and then he should be approved to join the HRC.

NEW BUSINESS

At the beginning of the meeting, Kat spoke to the rapid changes in our country and community because of the new administration's actions, policies and rhetoric. She questioned if community calls for action, resistance and advocacy would/should have an impact on our priorities, planning, and direction. Should actions and events we have scheduled be re-thought? The recent formation of several groups in the city

raises questions about the commission's role (i.e. leadership, coordination, facilitation, collaboration, representation?) as we are a city-appointed group. Are people aware of us?

Tom spoke of a new group in which he is involved.

Judith expressed concern that so many separate groups could fragment effective actions and communications.

Others agreed a good step would be to find ways to bring all these groups together. There was a feeling we are "behind" in responding and acting, as this is the mission of the HRC. We want to be pro-active, but not necessarily "taking over" or presenting ourselves as the "authority."

Kat stated that the HRC and YWCA should have a leadership role.

Community Outreach Forum Sheila reviewed the outcomes of the Community Outreach meeting Beth Horne coordinated, held after the November HRC meeting. This resulted in participants agreeing to a community forum on March 4 from 1-4. The HRC discussed what the goals and outcomes of this forum should be and whether the date still worked. HRC wants to move forward but questioned if the forum should now involve the new groups that have formed to create a coalition.

Tom will compile a list of people involved in other advocacy groups and any contact people. We will contact them informing them of this forum and ask for their input. An invitation letter will be sent prior to the press release (unless the correspondence drafted by Beth is already sufficient.). The draft press release written by Beth will be submitted to the writing sub-committee.

Peter suggested commission members should be part of each community group.

A planning meeting with those who attended the Community Outreach meeting was scheduled for Feb. 16, but Beth cannot attend and commissioners wanted to change that date to have her present. Kat will check with Beth about a new date. She will also meet with Ellie Davis.

Sheila stated there should be an HRC representative on the City Council Study Group.

Day of Service Peter raised the question as to whether we should continue with this project because of all the other issues claiming the community's attention and energy as well as focusing HRC's time and efforts on immediate human rights challenges.

Margaret and Sheila raised the issue mentioned by clergy of "volunteer fatigue."

HRC supported going ahead with planning, even if the scale is smaller, perhaps only two or three service projects. This could also be seen as another coalition activity supporting positive community activism and advocacy. Sub-Committee members will call those who responded to our letter for details and updates.

Peter requested we identify someone who can “teach” about the use of social media for more effective and frequent communication, publicity, public relations.

Margaret commented on the lack of publicity from the Daily News for the art auction despite attempts at a multi-pronged approach (press releases, phone calls, reminders, follow-ups, checking with reporters, etc.). She suggested HRC meet with the new editor of The Daily News.

Check-Ins

HRC name change roll-out is completed

Shawn and Kat are meeting with principals.

Margaret spoke with Angela Bik, Assistant Superintendent, re the ELL student who needed transportation from afterschool programs to see if there was any way we could be helpful. She also briefed her on the Day of Service. Peter sent her the information letter.

Kat met with Marshall Murray. The chair will exchange updates via email with Megan Tierney, the School Resource Officer, to exchange info/communicate about incidents in the community and at the schools. The Marshall will assign police attendance at pertinent meetings and information sharing.

Peter provided an update on Day of Service planning and the sub- committee meeting that took place before HRC meeting.

Kat will revise the executive summary for the Communication Plan. Peter has incorporated the Mayor’s edits. Kat will forward Peter any updates from the Marshall. Once completed an updated communication plan to be sent to Superintendent Viccaro.

There was preliminary discussion on changing our meetings to another day for next year.

Peace Prize date set for Wed. April 26.

Forms have been updated and will be sent to commissioners for review.

Forms will be distributed to principals.

Deadline to receive nominations: April 5.

Guidelines to teachers for writing recommendations (to be read at event) will be more detailed.

Judith will do programs if permitted.

Mini-Grants: Kat proposed supporting funding limited number of programs. (2-3)
She will talk to Friends for Peace.
Judith will do a follow-up letter on *mini-grants*.

Ramadan: May 26-June 25 HRC will plan for this (guest speaker, for example) at the next meeting.

Interfaith Clergy: We will wait for an update from Ben.

High School Incident: Tom asked Susan Viccaro about follow-up. Susan is finalizing discussion with Michael Eatman to provide workshops and training with staff and students. More information and details will be forthcoming. The Attorney General's office has been very responsive. Susan reported there was a definite up-tick after the election with harassment and name calling. She has met with the ELL staff to ask them to be mindful of any concerns or fears the students with whom they work may have; she has spoken to the leadership team and asked principals to tell staff to pay close attention, not just in classrooms, but also in halls, cafeteria, etc. She is receiving many resources on bullying, harassment, etc. and is sharing them with the leadership team to disseminate to building staff. There may be a possible incident which she will share with us if necessary after investigation.

Organizational Chart: Kat requested this be tabled and placed on next month's agenda.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioners state any reflections re: today's meeting.

Respectfully Submitted

Margaret McQuillan 7:40pm