

HRC Brainstorming Meeting, August 23rd

Present were: A. Ibrahim, T. Getz, K. Preftes, P. Blaiwas, S. Trieff, S. Flaherty, R. Robinson, R. Kaur, M. Willis-Goode

Guests— Jessica Amorosino, Jennifer Groskin, both candidates for HRC commission

Kat Preftes introduces potential new commissioners to the group, explaining the structure of the HRC to our two guests.

Shawn Flaherty discussed the expanded student liaison program and its accomplishments for the past year. Kat mentioned that Rose Robinson has drafted a proposal, on behalf of the student subcommittee, to develop a mentoring program to support younger students and tackle difficult subjects. The program would initially be geared toward students who identify as female but then would hopefully expand to include other genders.

Kat listed the HRC's accomplishments over the past year, including initiating the Know Your Neighbor project, the 2018 Peace Prize awards, and several editorial pieces published in the Newburyport Daily News.

Shelia Trieff described her meeting earlier that afternoon at the Commune Café with frequent NBPT Daily News editorial contributor Warren Russo. Warren's often stridently conservative views in the newspaper have put him at odds with a number of local citizens and most every member of the HRC. She said he sounded like a reasonable man, but was concerned that some of the online sources he references for his articles don't seem very reliable.

Know Your Neighbor

The group discussed venues for KYN. Who we need to contact at each venue, which venue should come first, and when we should schedule them.

Carly Fair, who oversees the LGBTQ group at the NBPT High School, should be contacted about approaching its members to participate in the KYN project.

Matt Willis-Goode suggested the Methodist Church as a venue. He also suggested that setting interviews at the Saturday breakfast at the Congregationalist Church or at the Salvation Army might make the attendees feel self-conscious.

Peter Blaiwas will contact Joanne Morris of the NBPT Documentary festival to request that she review the tapings to date and advise us on how to shape the footage into a completed documentary.

Peter will also contact Nancy Earls at the Kelleher learning enrichment center to see if we can do interviews there.

Kat will contact Port Plaza/Market Basket about a Sept. date to film.

Kat mentions that future of Friends for Peace as a fundraising source remains unclear, as are sources to replace it.

Transgender bill

Group discusses possible activities to bring attention to assuring that the present MA Transgender bill is not overturned this election day.

Suggestions include several letters to the paper clarifying this confusing ballot question. Also creating "clarification" signs for polling stations ("A Yes votes means...." "A No vote means....") before and on election day, and having "coffees" or small public forums to discuss the bill.

Ahmer mentions that Freedommassachusetts.org offers educational material on the Transgender bill, link should be included in all material produced by HRC.

Kat will check in with John Giordano on what Indivisible RISE is addressing this issue. Kat will also ask Lukas Phipps to brief the group on the Transgender Ballot question at the groups September 13 meeting.

(over)

Group discusses what is the mandate of HRC as an independent commission, and how we might address issues that may put us at odds with City Hall and the Mayor. Issues such as why isn't more being done to bring significantly more lower income housing to the area, including a timeline for making that happen.

Peter offers to look into existing and forthcoming housing stock and how much of each is earmarked for low-income housing.

Peter offers to ask John Feehan of the YWCA to address the issue of increasing lower-income housing stock in NBPT.

Tom mentions an upcoming film series sponsored by the Anti-Racism Affinity Group of Greater Newburyport, in partnership with the HRC and the YWCA. Films will be shown at the NBPT Senior Center on October 16 and 30, and November 20 and 27. Tom volunteers Peter to design flyer for the series. Peter happily agrees. Tom will see if one of the organizers can speak at our Sept. meeting.

Matt gives update on the Clergy Association.

General meeting adjourned at 730 pm.

Chair called executive session at 730pm to vote on the two potential new members. Jessica Amorosino and Jennifer Groskin are unanimously approved. Kat will then forward their resumes to the Mayor. Executive Session adjourned at 732 pm.

Next meeting, September 13 at 7 PM.