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October 20 2010 Meeting Minutes

Arlington Human Rights Commission Minutes – Final October 20, 2010

Present: Marlissa Briggett, Christine Carney, Vita Cohen, Gary Horowitz, Nick Minton, Chair Nancy Rhoads, Marlene Schultz, Bill Shea, Nancy Sweeney, Suzie Talukdar

Absent: Sheri Baron, Vice Chair Stacy Davison, Jorge Loayza

Open Forum –

Michael Levi, Co-Chair of the Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) spoke to us tonight of the school budget shortfall blame that appears to be targeted at the Special Education program. He voiced his concern of the hostility within the community and divisive comments of town leadership. He and Chair Rhoads have met with Supt. Bodie and discussed their concerns. Chair Rhoads suggested Mr. Levi meet with the School Committee Chair. The Commission will discuss the issue and will follow up with Mr. Levi with the AHRC decision.

Judson Pierce, Arlington Friends of Drama, also spoke to the Commission tonight and asked if they might consider sponsoring a Laramie Project event sometime within the year to keep this serious issue in the public mindset.

Review of September Minutes – Minutes accepted as amended.

Town Day – There was positive feedback regarding the questionnaire and penny count. A drawing was held for the four restaurant gift certificates. All will be notified of their winnings. Supplies will all be kept at Robbins House.

Review of Subcommittees –

Schools – There will be a special town meeting November 15th to discuss the budget shortfall. There is much concern for the dissention this has caused. The Special Ed program seems to be operating in a vacuum. Chair Rhoads will speak with Mr. Levi regarding the issues and suggestions discussed with the Commissioners.

A draft of guidelines regarding the bullying issue is in progress by the School Committee.

The Ottoson Middle School is in the midst of Peer Training. 35 students have committed to the program to date. There will be a Professional Development Day on November 2nd and the ADL will have a Parent Forum on October 26th to discuss strategies for handling the bully issue.

Community Outreach – Chair Rhoads has arranged for Chip Berlet to facilitate a retreat to discuss Public Discord with town leaders at the Community Safety Building on Thursday, November 4th. Invitations have been mailed and e-mailed. The Diversity Task Force and Vision 2020 will co-sponsor this event with the AHRC. *“How can we develop avenues for establishing civil discourse when a question arises and how do we handle it?”* A motion was made and accepted to pay \$200 to Mr. Berlet.

Policies and Procedures – Commissioner Cohen summarized the police policy of not determining citizenship of drivers during traffic stops and the police definition of a hate crime vs. an incident. She also spoke of a policy plan on Bullying that should be in place by next June.

Other Business –

Commissioner Sweeney has made arrangements to have an AHRC table at the library for the month of November.

Motion to adjourn was made and approved.

Submitted by:

Marylynn Carnell

Staff Assistant