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Human Rights Commission Minutes 11/17/2004

Human Rights Commission Meeting Minutes - Final
 November 17, 2004

In Attendance:

Cecilia Akuffo, Sheri Baron, Marliisa Briggett, Christine Carney, Christine Deshler, Kevin McGann, A. Nick Minton, Bill Shea, Nancy Sweeney

Absent:

Kim Lam, Nancy Rhoads, James Webster

Guest:

Elizabeth Connors, Diversity Task Force

The meeting was called to order at 8:02 p.m.

The October minutes were accepted with minor corrections.

1. **Betty Connors, Co-Chair of The Vision 2020 Diversity Task Force** - reported to the Commission that upon opening a letter that was sent anonymously to her attention she found a card with a computer generated Nazi swastika and the words, "Hitler was right." She called the Arlington Police Department and filed a report as she felt the need to make this incident very public. Her name is the only one printed on a public information flyer so she thinks this is the reason she was targeted. Chief Ryan followed up on the incident later in the day and provided extra patrols for precaution at the DTF dance to be held that night. She called Les Masterson, editor of the Advocate, and he generated an article for the Advocate regarding the incident. She stated that people do not realize that an incident such as this is a Federal crime. The card is now in the hands of the Mass. State Police fingerprinting lab. When Bill Shea asked what the Commission could do Ms. Connors suggested that the APD Rapid Response Card be given to citizens who are targeted and that the APD should notify the Commission when a card is distributed to anyone as these incidents are very upsetting to lots of people. She also suggested a series of articles be written periodically for the Advocate for public awareness. People need to be better educated and there is a need to have a system in place. She will work with Les Masterson and requested that anyone who would like to help in writing articles or have any suggestions to send them to her.

There was much discussion after the meeting with Ms. Connors regarding the police, the victims, making the public aware that things are happening to residents - Cecilia Akuffo and Christine Deshler will work on the questionnaire/brochure to be distributed with the census - Bill Shea will again speak with Betty Connors - Sheri Baron will speak with Chief Ryan - more information will be reported at next meeting.

2. **Comments on Diversity Task Force** - Bill Shea reported that he attended a recent meeting of the group and that the tension and animosity displayed at the meeting will require significant bridge building if they want to continue to be effective.

(**Note:** Nancy Sweeney followed up on a previous question regarding information as to the couples that applied for Marriage Certificates after the May 2004 Right to Marry law changed - 33 couples applied for certificates - 18 men applied and 4 couples did not return.)

3. **Review of Candidate's Night Forum** - Bill Shea reported the evening was quite interesting and overall went very well. Ed Markey was unable to attend but did send a representative who seemed unprepared - Jim Hall was well thought in answering his questions - Ken Chase was quite forceful - those who attended felt the questions, though involved, were excellent.
4. **Possible speaker for racial profiling for January event** - it was suggested that we choose a date later in January - once the date is set Nancy will try to book a room and Bill will work on getting the speaker, hopefully someone from Homeland Security.
5. **Complaints and Incidents:** - A Commissioner reported of another incident - car vandalism - she has spoken with Chief Ryan (APD) - she feels much better that the police are more aware of the circumstances and are patrolling the neighborhood regularly.

(**Note:** Regarding the local pizza shop incident - the Commission will work on ways for the community to handle future incidents of this kind.)

6. **Other Business:**

Christine Carney related that Nancy Rhoads wanted us to do a dialogue on main streaming students - Christine will call Nancy for further details on this matter.

Christine Carney related that there was much said about the banner hung at Town Hall on election day regarding the St. Agnes Bazaar - there was limited discussion and the Commission declined to get involved with the issue at this time.

Bill Shea will call Town Manager, Brian Sullivan to inquire of anyone interested in becoming a new member to the Commission.

Meeting adjourned at 9:28 p.m.