

**Arlington Human Rights Commission Minutes**  
**March 18, 2015**

**Present:** Sheri Baron, Christine Carney (Chair), Stacy Davison, Ghanda DiFiglia, Mel Goldsipe, Sharon Grossman, Gary Horowitz, Bill Logan

**Absent:** Marlissa Briggett, Douglas Davidoff, Jorge Loayza, Nick Minton

The February minutes were accepted, as amended, by all except that Ms. Davison and Ms. Grossman abstained.

Chair Carney reported that there was no correspondence.

Chair Carney reported that the Commission received a phone message from a citizen who was offended by an email that was sent to the Arlington High School community by its principal, Dr. Janger. It was reported that he has been sending emails to inform and educate the community about all upcoming holidays. The caller was offended because Dr. Janger used the phrase, "Blessed Lent." The Commission discussed the emails and decided that without seeing them, it was not possible to form an opinion. Chair Carney volunteered to share some of the emails with Commissioners.

The Arlington High School Civil Rights retreat was discussed although the advisor, M. Konstandakis, did not attend the meeting. Chair Carney explained that it is a retreat for Arlington High School students to discuss civil rights issues and it was hoped that the Commission would provide some funding. The following motion was discussed: The AHRC Commission authorizes up to \$200 to be provided to M. Konstandakis to offset the costs of the Arlington High School Civil Rights Retreat. An amended motion was unanimously passed to raise the amount to \$500.

Christine Bongornio, Director of Health and Human Services, supported the need for an Administrative Assistant for the Commission and assured us that the position will be posted and aggressively pursued. The position is 4 hours per week at \$15/hour. Job responsibilities include taking and posting minutes and agendas, receiving correspondence, checking the AHRC phone messages, and any projects suggested by Commissioners. The need for and budget constraints related to hiring an Executive Director for the Commission was discussed. The Commission unanimously 'no action' on the Town Meeting Warrant Article calling for one.

The Commission unanimously voted 'no action' on the Town Meeting Warrant Article related to expanding the Commission's investigative powers.

C. Bongornio reported that the proponent of the articles made a Freedom of Information request for the number of official complaints made to the Commission. It was reported that there were two since 2006. A discussion about how few complaints have been received occurred and some suggestions were made including having a Human Rights event that coincides with International Human Rights Day.

C. Bongiorno will arrange for Commissioners to have Town of Arlington email addresses.

There is one opening on the Commission and the need to reach out to members of the community to be sure that every effort is being made for the Commission to reflect the diversity of Arlington was discussed.

Commissioner Horowitz volunteered to try and attend Massachusetts Association of Human Rights Commissions meetings. Chair Carney will get the dates and times to share.

Commissioners Logan and Goldsipe discussed the possibility of having an Arlington High School student become a student liaison to the AHRC.

#### Subcommittee Updates:

LGBTQ and Event - Commissioner Goldsipe reported that issues discussed included students hoping that Arlington Public Schools staff begin to use gender neutral language, a request for gender neutral bathrooms, and a teen center. Commissioner Davison noted that they have been looking into gender neutral bathrooms at Ottoson Middle School but that it has been challenging to find a space that is appropriate; finding a solution is on-going.

Survey - Commissioner Goldsipe reported that the final document will need to be approved by the AHRC. The timeline is as follows: April-send to key groups; September-launch the survey, including at Town Day; October-Human Rights Day (potentially); Vision 2020 survey inclusion or link

Showing of "Selma" - Commissioner Logan reported that it will cost \$200 to rent The Capitol but this does not include the cost of the DVD. He is hoping for a June showing and reported that the Arlington Town Democratic Committee voted to contribute \$100; he will be talking to the Republican Town Committee and Vision 2020 Diversity Task Force.

Joint Arlington School Committee/AHRC Subcommittee - Commissioner Grossman reported that the group met again and decided that they will be focusing on moving forward to ensure that disproportionality issues related to school suspensions are decreased.

Vision 2020 Diversity Task Group February 28, 2015 Event Recap - it was noted that it was a well done event with great participation and turnout.

#### Community Updates and Happenings:

A Potluck for LGBTQ Families will be happening at Brackett School on Wednesday 4/8/15

The White Ribbon Campaign and the First Step Domestic Violence Program is sponsoring a program on Thursday March 26, 2015

The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Submitted by,  
Sharon P. Grossman  
Commissioner

