

Arlington Human Rights Commission
Minutes, June 21, 2017
Jefferson Cutter House, 8:00pm

Present: Chairs Christine Carney and Mel Goldsipe and Commissioners Wendy Bell, Ghandi DiFiglia, Kristina Fontanez, Sharon Grossman, Gary Horowitz, Christopher Huvos, William Logan, and David Swanson.

Absent: Commissioners Sheri Baron and Nick Minton

Guests: Michael Byrne, Naomi Greenfield (soon-to-be sworn in as a Commissioner), and Heidi Hoffman

Citizen Open Forum: Michael Byrne, the drama teacher at Arlington High School, presented the school's upcoming Unity Project to the Commission. The Unity Project is a national, interactive public art project that was created as a response to the divisiveness and negative rhetoric in American politics. The project seeks to raise consciousness about the labels we give ourselves and others, explore how those labels both support and limit building interconnected, interesting communities, and help us celebrate our uniqueness and strengthen our ties to each other.

The physical project consists of 32 posts, each with identifiers such as, "I'm a parent; I speak English as a second language; I identify as LGBTQ," etc. Participants tie colorful yarn to posts that reflect their identities. Their yarn intertwines with others' to create a web of interconnectedness. In the end, we see that we are all connected by something, and it's our diversity that builds a strong and vibrant community.

Arlington High School plans to conduct the Unity Project on its front lawn from September 11, 2017 to September 18, 2017. All students, teachers, parents, and community residents will be invited to participate.

Chair Goldsipe suggested that the Commission could sell "Hate Has No Home Here" signs during 1 night of the Project.

Chair Carney encouraged Commissioners to volunteer to help with the Project.

Chair Carney told Guest Byrne that the Commission would gladly promote the Unity Project as the date draws closer.

Minutes: Chair Goldsipe moved to table the minutes from May 18, 2017; seconded by Commissioner Horowitz. All voted in favor.

Correspondence: None.

Incidents & Complaints: The Commission received no incidents / complaints from the police department. Chair Carney reported an incident involving an altercation between 2 males on

the Minuteman Bike Path, where 1 of the males used racial slurs against the other. However, the police department is still investigating this incident.

Chair Carney provided Commissioners with a copy of the Town Patch article describing the incident.

Human Rights Campaign Municipal Equity Index Survey: Chair Goldsipe explained that, in addition to scoring companies, the Human Rights Campaign provides cities and towns with a score indicating the “quality of life” for the LGBTQIA community in a given city or town. Arlington has received a score of 80 out of 100 this year.

Chair Goldsipe said she would talk with Town HHS Director Christine Bongiorno about ways the Commission could help the Town improve its score. Chair Goldsipe also mentioned that the new Rainbow Commission would help in this effort too.

Guidelines for Responding to Hate Incidents in Arlington Public Schools: Commissioner Huvos presented a draft guidelines proposal and indicated that he would like help with further drafting. Chairs Carney and Goldsipe, Commissioners Fontanez and Grossman, and Guest Greenfield agreed to work with Commissioner Huvos on a draft proposal. They plan to have a draft ready for next month’s meeting.

Logo Contest: Chair Goldsipe reported that there were 3 logo contest finalists. She hoped that the Commission would vote on a winner at the next meeting.

“Crackerman” Play: Commissioner DiFiglia read the “Crackerman” play and provided us with a brief oral synopsis. She recommended that the Commission, at this time, not sponsor a Town event where the play would be read aloud.

Update on Arlington Public Schools Cultural Competency Training: None. Chairs Carney and Goldsipe indicated that an update would be added to the agenda for the next meeting.

Subcommittee Reports: None.

Commission Opening: Commissioner DiFiglia indicated that she planned to resign her position on the Commission after the next meeting. As a result, the Town and the Commission have a vacancy and are searching to fill the position. The application deadline is June 23, 2017, but Chairs Carney and Goldsipe said they would talk with the Town about extending the application deadline.

All present Commissioners agreed to spread the word regarding the vacancy in the hopes of attracting a good candidate pool.

Summer Meetings: Chairs Carney and Goldsipe said the next 2 summer meetings would occur on July 19, 2017 and August 23, 2017.

Town Day: Led by Chairs Carney and Goldsipe, the Commission brainstormed several ideas and activities that the Commission could do for Town Day this year on September 16. These

ideas and activities included: selling “Hate Has No Home Here” signs; providing Town residents with a take-home calendar of upcoming Commission events; providing Town residents with Commission “swag” (i.e., “#Arl4All” bags); and high-lighting Arlington High School’s Unity Project.

Community Events & Info: Guest Greenfield proposed a “personal storytelling” event that could be hosted by the Commission in the future. The event would involve Town residents of diverse backgrounds gathering together to share personal stories that highlight their diversity and some of the challenges they’ve faced and overcome in their lifetime. Guest Greenfield said she’s research the idea further and propose it at a future meeting.

Adjournment: Commissioner Horowitz moved to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Commissioner Logan. All voted in favor.