

**Arlington Human Rights Commission**  
**Minutes, August 23, 2017**  
**Jefferson Cutter House, 8:00pm**

Present: Chairs Christine Carney and Mel Goldsipe and Commissioners Kristina Fontanez, Naomi Greenfield, Sharon Grossman, Gary Horowitz, Christopher Huvos, William Logan, Nick Minton, and David Swanson

Absent: Commissioner Sheri Baron

Guests: Abbi Matheson, Arlington Advocate reporter; Christopher Ellinger, Director of True Story Theater; Ted Peluso, A-TED

**Assign Minute Taker:** Commissioner Swanson agreed to be responsible for taking future meeting minutes.

**Citizen Open Forum:** Abbi Matheson of the Arlington Advocate introduced herself and let the Commission know that she is trying to attend and meet as many Town Commissions as possible.

**True Story Theater:** Christopher Ellinger, Director of True Story Theater, asked whether the Commission would partner with True Story Theater in applying for a community grant.

Commissioner Minton inquired about the grant's timeline. Ellinger said that they would be applying in September of 2017 and would find out whether they were chosen to receive funding in April of 2018.

Commissioner Huvos moved that the Commission partner with True Story Theater in its grant proposal by committing to collaborate with True Story Theater on at least three future community events; seconded by Commissioner Fontanez. All voted in favor.

Ellinger also indicated that True Story Theater had received a small grant from the Foley Hoag Foundation and asked the Commission for potential ways this grant could be used. Chair Goldsipe recommend using the grant for bystander intervention training.

**A-TED Diversity Events:** Ted Peluso of the Committee on Tourism and Economic Development (A-TED) told the Commission about two upcoming diversity events in town: (1) Elite Freestyle Karate on Medford Street would be hosting a martial arts demonstration outside its storefront; and (2) Japanese Language School on Mass. Ave. would be hosting free calligraphy lessons and demonstration outside its storefront.

Chair Carney asked for additional details so that the Commission could promote the events via social media. Peluso agreed to send emails to Chairs Carney and Goldsipe detailing event info.

Also, should the Commission decide to host any future outside events, Peluso recommended using the Uncle Sam Memorial Statute and Plaza as a potential venue. Chair Carney said the Commission would certainly consider the Plaza for future events.

**Minutes:** Chair Carney moved to approve the minutes from July 19, 2017, as amended; seconded by Commissioner Horowitz. Commissioner Minton abstained. All other Commissioners voted in favor.

**Correspondence:** Chairs Carney and Goldsipe explained that the Commission received the following correspondence:

- Email from a resident – Obtained a “Hate Has No Home Here” sign from the Commission through the Church of Our Savior and loves it. She encouraged the Commission to have the signs more readily available for the general public. She also volunteered to help distribute the signs in the future.
- Email from Christine Bongiorno, Town Director of Health & Human Services – Requested a Commission representative serve on the Town’s Surveillance Study Committee. Commissioner Horowitz agreed to serve on the Committee.
- Phone call from consumer advocate – Inquired about the Town’s recent change in energy providers. The Commission suggested the consumer call the Town Manager’s Office for more info.
- Email from Daniel Levenson at ADL New England – Inquired about current Arlington efforts regarding diversity and inclusiveness. Chair Goldsipe said she replied to the email encouraging Levenson to attend a future Commission meeting. Commissioner Grossman said she’d reach out to Levenson to indicate her willingness to meet with him to talk more about the Commission.

**Incidents & Complaints:**

- 1) August 7, 2017 Graffiti Incident – Two graffiti swastikas were found on the backside of a building in town.
- 2) Confederate Flag Incident – Commissioner Huvos explained that a tenant in a building owned by the Arlington Housing Authority (AHA) is currently displaying a Confederate flag. This has prompted neighbors to complain, because the Confederate flag, to many people, represents a symbol of hate and bigotry. After much discussion, Chair Carney offered four action steps that will be pursued: (1) in consultation with Town Counsel Doug Heim, Commissioner Greenfield would write a 1-2 page handout discussing the Confederate flag’s history, the flag’s symbolism, and the flag’s potential negative impact on a large segment of our community; (2) Chair Carney would meet with Pamela Hallett of AHA to discuss whether lease renewal agreements for all tenants could--as is the case with many other rental properties and condo associations in town--prohibit all flags or similar displays on the exterior of the properties; (3) the Commission would

ask neighbors to display “Hate Has No Home Here” signs; and (4) Commissioner Huvos would discuss with Carlos Hoyt whether it’s possible to meet with nearby neighbors to create productive dialogue about this issue.

**Budget:** Chair Carney told Commissioners that last year the Commission gave back roughly \$1500 to the Town in unused funds. Chair Carney said the Commission currently has \$4,189.44, as well as an additional \$636.78 set aside specifically for educational events or training programs that must be “community-wide”.

Chair Goldsipe suggested that some of the funds could be used for cultural competency training.

Commissioner Logan suggested that some of the funds could be used for mediation training.

Chair Carney asked the Commissioners to come next month with prepared ideas for ways the Commission could use the funds.

Commissioner Huvos suggested that some of the funds could be used for a series of cultural educational events. Chair Carney liked this idea and indicated that the Commission should plan a separate meeting to brainstorm this series of events.

**Town Day:** Commissioner Grossman moved to allocate up to \$500 for Town Day supplies, including promotional material; seconded by Commissioner Logan. All voted in favor.

**Meet A Muslim Event:** Chair Goldsipe briefly described the “Meet a Muslim ” event, which is looking for an organizer to host it in Town. After brief discussion, the Commission decided to draw on the wealth of talent and expertise within the Arlington community for events related to interfaith understanding rather than sponsoring this event.

**Double-Take Storytelling Event:** Commissioner Greenfield provided the Commission with an update regarding the planning process for the Commission’s Double-Take Storytelling Event. The event would involve Town residents of diverse backgrounds attending an interview workshop, rehearsing a 5-minute personal story, auditioning that story on camera, and then 9 stories being selected for a viewing for the general public at Town Hall.

Commissioner Greenfield met with ACMi and they agreed to help with the filming and film editing aspects of the event. ACMi also agreed to help promote the event, and indicated that they would be happy to staff the live event. Commissioner Greenfield suggested that the Commission pay ACMi’s “partnership fee” so that they can collaborate with ACMi on Double-Take’s promotion.

Commissioner Fontanez moved to have the Commission spend up to \$70 in partnership with ACMi for promotional event advertising, conditional on approval by the Town; seconded by Commissioner Greenfield. All voted in favor.

Commissioner Greenfield outlined a rough timeline for auditions, film editing, and event promotion, with the final event to take place at Town Hall on November 18, 5-7pm.

Commissioner Swanson agreed to work with the Town on reserving the Town Hall Auditorium space for the event.

Commissioner Greenfield shared with the Commission a proposed flyer for the Double-Take event.

Commissioner Grossman moved to add a line-item to the Commission budget to authorize general printing for Swifty Printing for \$500; seconded by Commissioner Greenfield. All voted in favor.

**AHS Community Building Coordinating Committee:** Chair Goldsipe explained that Arlington High School is forming a committee to coordinate efforts to build a more inclusive, communal school. Commissioner Grossman agreed to act as the Commission's liaison to this committee.

**Draft Guidelines for Responding to Hate Incidents in Arlington Public Schools & Subcommittee Reports:** Commissioner Minton moved to table these topics for discussion at the next Commission meeting; seconded by Chair Goldsipe. All voted in favor.

**Commission Opening Update:** Chair Carney told the Commission that Commissioner Bell had resigned due to new work conflicts. The Commission thanked Commissioner Bell for her service. Because Commissioner Bell was appointed by the Town Manager, Chair Carney indicated that she would talk with the Town Manager's Office regarding a new Commissioner appointment to fill this vacancy.

Chair Goldsipe said that the deadline to fill the vacancy left by former Commissioner DiFiglia has closed. Because Commissioner DiFiglia was appointed by the School Committee, Chair Carney indicated that she would check with the School Committee on the status of current Commission applicants.

**Community Events & Info:** Commissioner Greenfield provided a recap for the well-attended, well-organized community vigil that was held in Arlington post-Charlottesville. Over 200 people attended the vigil to condemn the hateful incidents that took place in Charlottesville and celebrate Arlington's diverse and inclusive community. At the vigil, several action steps were taken, including poster-making, drafting over 200 postcards and mailing them to Charlottesville, drafting 80 cards and mailing them to Charlottesville, and collaborating to create a "Make Change" banner, which incorporated community suggestions for making positive changes in our society.

Chairs Carney and Goldsipe commented on what a great success the vigil was and that it could serve as a model for future Commission-related events.

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

Submitted by David Swanson, Commissioner