

Arlington Human Rights Commission
Minutes, March 8, 2017
Jefferson-Cutter House, 8:00 p.m.

Present: Co-chairs Christine Carney and Mel Goldsipe, Commissioners Wendy Bell, Kristina Fontanez, Sharon Grossman, Gary Horowitz, Ghanda DiFiglia, David Swanson, Nick Minton, Marlissa Briggett, Sheri Baron

Absent: Christopher Huvos, Bill Logan

The meeting was called to order at 8:19.

This was a special planning meeting to focus on the Commission's priorities and goals in the year ahead. Commissioners first discussed: What are the urgent issues we need to address?

Among the responses were:

- Volunteer Engagement (how to harness the energy for HRC issues in town)
- Trust Act approval (and all that goes along with that)
- Making sure people know we are here to address discrimination
- Fulfilling our educational mission
- Being proactive *and* reactive
- Hate crimes
- Communicating with other groups in town working on our issues (**Action item:** make a list of the groups, have a meeting with the leaders)
- Reaching out to people on the other side of our issues, rather than having events that are more like echo chambers
Go to a diverse variety of groups, rather than expect them to come to our events (rotary group, realtors, houses of worship)

Action item: After town meeting, it was suggested we spent the second part of 2017 doing outreach to other groups to find out what they think we should be working on. Then, in 2018, we could create dialogue spaces...events in the senior buildings, AHA properties, Look into the viewership of ACMI. Opportunities there?

Commissioner Grossman raised the concern of capacity. We need to be able to follow through if we raise expectations.

Commissioner Fontanez suggested an event geared to fence sitters. There was discussion about our role. Commissioner Bell pointed out that, with controversial topics, there are always people on the extreme sides of a topic. Studies show they can't change each other's minds. If there is a scale from 1 to 5, the 1s and 5s are firmly entrenched in their positions. The most fruitful exchange of ideas comes with the 2s talking to 3s, and 3s to 4s.

Commissioner Grossman urged that we not forget to reach our base and that it be important that we not sponsor something that goes against our values. Commissioner Minton indicated that some of our greatest successes came from preaching to the choir. They indicated these events are important and affirming and worth something in themselves.

Commissioner Bell suggested we think about topics that are important to a group we want to reach out to. For example, we could talk about health care with seniors. She mentioned human trafficking as a possible topic to reach the 3s and 4s. It was suggested that we partner with All Hands In for something about that.

Commissioner DiFiglia indicated that faith communities would be a good place to reach 1s and 5s together. Discussion about how to reach them ensued. **Action item:** Christine will find out about the Interfaith Clergy Group meetings. In early to mid-May, we should host a coffee or attend a meeting for clergy to see their thoughts on the Trust Act.

Trust Act plan

It was decided we didn't need another Trust Act public information event before Town Meeting but that we could spread ourselves through the precincts (especially precinct meetings) to discuss the Trust Act.

Discussion about diversity of the Commission and how to address that. Action item: Have an active volunteer group with diversity. It will also provide the bench from which to fill openings.

Upcoming events:

We went over the list of events to see who could work on what:

Christine will go to Diversity Task Force meeting.

Marlissa will organize Syria documentary event.

Sheri will organize the Patriot's Day launch of #arl4all

Wendy will attend True Story Theater event.

David and Bill are attending the Justice Reform Event

Wendy and Gary will attend MAHRC meetings (though not the next one)

Christine will call the Harvard professor about a possible dialogue on confronting your fears of Islam.

Ghanda will assist with the confronting anti-Semitism dialogue

Commissioner Grossman motioned that we adjourn, Commissioner Baron seconded. It was unanimously passed.

Submitted by:

Marlissa Briggett, Commissioner