

Arlington Human Rights Commission Minutes
February 15, 2017
Arlington Senior Center, 8:00

Present: Co-Chairs Christine Carney and Mel Goldsipe, Commissioners Christopher Huvos, David Swanson, Sharon Grossman, Kristina Fontanez, Bill Logan, Marlissa Briggett

Absent: Sheri Baron, Wendy Bell, Ghanda DiFiglia Gary Horowitz and Nick Minton

Guests: Joel Olicker, Ted Peluso, Ann Sullivan, Alex Coats, Susan Bourne

1. Citizens Open Forum

Ann Sullivan expressed concern over Attorney General Sessions's treatment of transgender students and was concerned that they wouldn't be protected. Alex Coats, a high school student, spoke to that, and indicated that the high school was a tolerant place. She noted however a recent spate of vandalism in the bathrooms with racist, xenophobic and homophobic graffiti.

Commissioner Goldsipe noted that last year the Commission worked with the town to add gender identity to our list of protected classes, then the state passed a similar law at the state law, which is unfortunately vulnerable to appeal. Because of the local ordinance, Arlington transgender students will be protected.

2. Review of Minutes

Commissioner Briggett moved to table the minutes until next month; Commissioner Goldsipe seconded. The motion unanimously passed.

3. Correspondence Received

The Commission has received several emails from people wanting to offer their assistance with regard to immigration.

4. Incidents

There have been 5 incidents reported since last month, briefly described as follows.

- a) January 24. There has been a spate of racist, sexist, homophobic, anti-Semitic graffiti in the AHS bathroom. There was a student-led assembly. The resource officer is internally investigating. According to Dr. Janger, usually graffiti like this occurs once a year. In the last two months, it started showing up and multiplying.
- b) January 21. There was homophobic graffiti on the entry area of a coffee shop.
- c) January 23. 2-3 swastikas were reported painted on a building adjacent to the bike path, by the skating rink.
- d) February 8. A swastika type image was drawn on the front of a home. One of the residents is Jewish.
- e) February 15. A resident received an envelope in the mail, addressed to her and containing a swastika. She does not know who would do this but indicated that she went to the Women's March and her hat is hanging on the front of her house and that

her name and picture is displayed in the Arlington Advocate as an attendee of the Travel Ban Protest at the First Parish UU.

Commissioner Carney suggested we use the press release to distribute the information to the Arlington Advocate. Commissioner Grossman asked if police were seeing if other towns were seeing the same thing. Ann Sullivan asked if we worked with the Attorney General's office. Marliisa Briggett indicated that she will forward the information to the lawyer handling hate crimes at the AG's office. Joel Olicker asked if we knew what the police did in cases where, e.g., hate mail is received. Commissioner Grossman asked if we could have the police liaison come to next month's meeting. Alex Coats asked if Representative Sean Garballey is involved. Commissioner Goldsipe mentioned that he was very helpful with the transgender initiative last year.

5. Update on Commissioner Vacancy

We have two new Commissioners: Kristina Fontanez and David Swanson. Commissioner Briggett will be here until the School Committee appoints a new Commissioner.

6. LGBTQIA+ Commission Warrant Article

Commissioner Goldsipe discussed the idea of a new town commission focused on LGBTQIA+ issues but that would not hear discrimination complaints. There were many deficiencies identified by an assessment the Human Rights Campaign did for its Municipal Equality Index. The town manager believes a commission dedicated to LGBTQIA+ issues would help address the deficiencies. The AHRC would collaborate with the group. Commissioner Briggett moved that we support the creation of this commission. Commissioner Grossman seconded it. In discussion, Commissioner Carney indicated she'd rather have town funds directed to create a town human rights officer. Commissioner Goldsipe indicated that the money for an LGBTQIA+ Commission would be nominal compared to the amount it would take to hire someone. Commissioner Carney expressed concern that there may be questions about why other mission-specific commissions are not being created. In a vote, the motion unanimously passed.

Commissioner Carney moved that we sponsor a public information event on this, if needed. Commissioner Grossman seconded. The motion unanimously passed.

7. Sanctuary/Trust Act Warrant Article

The Commissioners reviewed the draft of the Arlington Trust Resolution. Commissioner Carney told the Commission that it will be sent to the town's legal counsel and will also be reviewed by an immigration attorney.

The resolution describes the town's unwritten practice and makes it into a policy.

Commissioner Fontanez asked about talking points. We'll need a fact sheet on the town's website that will include the financial piece.

Commissioner Carney reported that the Board of Selectmen hearing on this is February 27. The Commission would like to do a public information event the weekend before with town officials and an immigration attorney on a panel to discuss the warrant article, followed by Q & A. There was discussion about who might be good for the panel. The meeting will take place on Sunday, February 26 at 2:00. Commissioners Fontanez and Swanson will assist Commissioners Carney and Goldsipe with planning the event. All Commissioners should attend.

8. Immigration & Religious Tolerance Events

Separate from the warrant article, people have expressed concern over how to help people who are fearful and/or who need legal assistance. We can put together a list. It should have a disclaimer from us. Commissioner Brigggett will draft the disclaimer. It might also make sense to organize a MIRA Know Your Rights Workshop. Commissioner Goldsipe will contact Naomi Greenfield about this.

There was discussion about having dialogues addressing Anti-Muslim/Anti-Semitism sentiments. Commissioner Carney mentioned Professor Ali from BU. Confronting Your Fears of Islam. She also mentioned the documentary about Syrian refugees. Commissioner Brigggett will contact Carla Gates to preview the documentary.

Commissioner Carney will book a room for March 23 and April 12 for these events. Commissioner Grossman moved that we plan three events to address refugee crisis, fear of Islam and anti-Semitism, spending up to \$500 for the dialogues. Commissioner Logan seconded. The motion unanimously passed.

9. Subcommittee Reports

#Arl4All

Ted Peluso spoke to the Commission about ATED sponsoring a series of diversity events at Uncle Sam Plaza, each one featuring a different culture (with food trucks and cultural activities) on weekend afternoons. He asked for the Commission's sponsorship. Commissioner Brigggett moved to co-sponsor the diversity weekends at Uncle Sam Plaza. Commissioner Grossman seconded. The motion unanimously passed.

Commissioner Goldsipe further discussed the #Arl4All project with the Patriot's Day parade serving as the kickoff. Discussion ensued about what that may look like (possibility of interfaith groups marching, giving out multicultural candy). Commissioner Fontanez moved and Commissioner Goldsipe seconded that we march in the parade and that we appropriate up to \$100 for flyers and miscellaneous handouts (candy, stickers, etc.). The motion unanimously passed.

Commissioner Goldsipe will send out the list of faith groups to see who has connections to reach out to see if they'd like to collaborate.

Schools

Commissioner Grossman described to new Commissioners that we have school liaison program, including reaching out to the principals and the PTOs.

10. Queer Mystic/True Story Theater event – March 31

11. Justice Reform Event March 25 – The Commission is a co-sponsor of this event. Commissioners Logan and Swanson will attend and bring AHRC materials, brochures, etc.

12. Training Active Bystanders Workshop

We were asked to co-sponsor a workshop. People wanted to know more details before co-sponsoring. Commissioner Briggett will be the organizer and invite her to attend the March meeting or send the curriculum for the Commission to review.

Commissioner Goldsipe moved to adjourn. Commissioner Fontanez seconded. The motion unanimously passed.

Submitted by:

Marlissa Briggett, Commissioner