



Cambridge Human Rights Commission
Thursday, January 8, 2009

Present: Commissioners Marla Erlie, Susan Ostrander, Charles Kavanagh, Bill Donovan, Dan Klubock; and staff members Nancy Schlacter, Colleen Johnston, Joe Johnson and Carmen S. Negron.

Absent: Randa, Barbara, and Mercedes was absent.

Chair Marla Erlie called the meeting to order at 6:12 pm

1. Review of minutes

The December minutes were tabled because we didn't have a quorum.

2. Commissioner Recruitment Update

Nancy stated that the City Manager is still accepting applications through January 16th. Carmen reported she had received 7 applications so far. Nancy stated that Peik Larson makes 8 and that he has already been offered a Commissioner position by Mr. Healy, but he will wait until he has the other 2 before appointing the new Commissioners. Commissioners suggested that Mr. Larsen could start attending the meetings in the meantime. The interviewing committee will be interviewing some of the applicants next Monday, January 12th. Charles will contact Randa to see if interviews are still going to be done at her house. Susan said she saw the ad that Joe coordinated on the cable and commended Joe. Ini Tomeu from the City Manager's office also had the ad put in the newspapers.

3. Investigator's Report

Colleen stated that there were 5 cases closed, 2 are close to being completed and that there is a 3rd that has a settlement agreement in progress, while 14 remain open. She stated that we might not have received many new cases due to the holidays. Commissioners asked if she could go back to a more detailed and written report on the cases like in the past. Nancy explained that we can't discuss particulars about parties. Commissioners stated that their interest is because they want to find out which organizations are repeat offenders and be able to inform the public of the nature of cases we are getting. Nancy and Colleen will talk of ways to do that report, because there might be a realty company as a respondent and we might be painting them as a repeater when in reality there is no cause. We need to be careful because it may not be appropriate to share information. Maybe do it in a generic way. Commissioners asked if any of the closed cases were mediated and Colleen stated that Joe mediated one, but mediation doesn't always happen because lawyers come to agreements amongst themselves. Commissioners asked about the status on the transgender case and Colleen said that so far the parties are fulfilling what they agreed to do.

4. Other updates

Marla said she met with Dr. Saheed and the CRLS Assistant Principal and they are pleased to proceed with organizing Muslim recognition activities at the high school. They are planning on meeting with some teachers next month to see how to proceed with such activities. They are also thinking of meeting with the School Committee to see if they would be helpful.

Bill stated that he met with Chris Cotter from Community Development Department (CDD) who informed him that there were minimal subprime foreclosures in Cambridge. HUD has a program that extends

assistance to communities with subprime problems and Cambridge was so low in numbers that they didn't qualify for funding. Chris explained the first time homebuyer program and how brokers can't take advantage of clients because CDD monitors the lenders. They also give advice to landlords.

Joe provided an update on a stereotyping assembly conducted by Sharon Lozada and her STARS students at CRLS. He said that there were between 200-300 students, it lasted about 1 ½ hours and was really good. Joe talked to students to let them know about the Commission, students did skits and had a question and answer session. Joe said it would be really good for us to see a taping of this event at a future meeting. He might get a copy of the video and do a facebook page for them. He said they will have another assembly for Black History Month.

MCAD Chairman Malcolm Medley wasn't able to attend the meeting this month so Commissioners were thinking of inviting him at a later date. Nancy stated that she will be out on vacation during the February CHRC meeting and asked if Commissioners could please invite him to a later meeting instead.

Marla stated she is wondering how the Commissioners could hook up with employees to do mediation. They had asked Duane Brown about including this in the employee booklet but it has not been included yet. Commissioners are concerned that employees aren't getting the word that they are here to mediate, to avoid law suits against the city, to diffuse escalating conflicts. They want to offer their services to divert cases early on so it doesn't get to that stage, if they had been used appropriately. Carmen explained that some city employees are unionized and they go to their union representatives and meet with Michael Gardner to resolve such problems. Nancy will revisit with Duane regarding the employee booklet, to see if this will be permitted or not.

Susan will continue to contact immigration organizations (Concilio Hispano, MAPS, etc.) to see what kinds of immigrant rights outreach are being offered in Cambridge. She looked on their websites and it seems like they are overwhelmed by other issues. She said she will try to drop by their offices to find out. Nancy also suggested the Community Learning Center and Carmen added the Centro Presente that even though they have moved away from Cambridge, they still service Cambridge. Marla said there is also a Haitian organization somewhere in Cambridge.

Commissioners had a draft of a letter they wanted to submit to City Council in support of the Gaza issue but they weren't able to vote because there wasn't a quorum. Nancy stated that City Councillor Decker and Mayor Simmons' proposed resolution will be on next City Council meeting agenda on Monday and suggested they write a letter and have someone go to the City Council meeting to read it so they could voice their sentiments but to explain that it is not officially from the Commission because they didn't have a quorum to vote on it. Marla said she will do that. Dan said he could go to the City Council meeting to read the letter if Marla can't make it.

Randa will contact Nancy Murray at ACLU to arrange for instructors or trainers to conduct Know Your Rights Workshops with Sharon Lozada at high school.

Joe will post the Student Discrimination Survey Report on the CHRC website. Susan has a copy if needed.

Meeting adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

Next Commission meeting will be held on Thursday, February 5, 2009 at 6:00 p.m.