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*Belmont Human Rights Commission*

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**Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, November 5, 2015  
Belmont Town Hall  
Conference Room 1**

The following were in attendance:

**Members:** Nan Donald, Carl Brauer, Jirair Hovsepian, Paul Solomon, Barbara Watson, Fran Yuan, Sarah Jane Henman

**Liaisons:** Belmont High School: Jia Zhang; Belmont Against Racism: Charlene O'Connor, Natalie Stoller; Belmont Police Department: Captain J. Peter Hoerr

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

Absences: Edie Stringfellow; Mirela Duda; Darren Bowmeester. Edie has resigned from the Commission or is about to resign. Family and work responsibilities have made it difficult for her to attend meetings and she regrets having to resign. Mirela had tickets to a special concert. Darren was on a business trip.

1. **Meeting minutes:** The October meeting minutes were adopted with minor edits.
2. **Phone line and e-mail:** Darren reported no activity on either. Phone line and minute-taking assignments: November; Carl; December, Nan; January, Mirela.
3. **Martin Luther King, Jr. Breakfast:**

Melissa Hart, the BHS girls' varsity basketball coach, confirmed that the team will oversee gym activities.

Diane Wiltshire, the METCO Director, confirmed that several Middle Schoolers who are in an African dance class together, will perform at the breakfast. One of the dancers is a Belmont METCO student and her mother is the dance teacher.

Barbara reported that Mirela is seeking someone to supervise child care for younger children. This person will probably have to be CORI-checked.

Sarah Jane and Jia will set up e-mail registration, with advice from Natalie.

Barbara will ask janitorial staff to set up tables and chairs on Sunday night. The tables are too heavy for volunteers. She will ask the Belmontian Club for help on Sunday night. Fran will look at the condition of center-pieces in her attic. It might be time to replace them.

4. Fran and Carl reported on publicity for "Growing Up Trans," the Frontline documentary that HRC is cosponsoring on November 19 at First Church, UU. They also reported on the panel

discussion that was held at BHS in advance of a performance of the "Laramie Project," by the Performing Arts Club at the high school on this Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

A wide-ranging discussion ensued. No definite conclusions were reached, but there was some interest in talking to the school superintendent about additional training of teachers on handling questions related to sexuality and diversity. Fran observed that 15 years ago, gay parents were sending their children to private school. There is more acceptance of differences today than there was then. Consequently LGBT students are more inclined to remain in public school. In the panel discussion at the high school, gay teachers noted the importance of having heterosexual allies.

Fran reported on the success of this year's Gay Straight Alliance Committee Potluck dinner that she and her husband hosted. There was discussion of the value and importance of social events such as the Potluck dinner and the Ice Cream Social, which might be revived.

#### **5. Liaison Reports:**

Sarah Jane spoke about a possible student demonstration in support of a teacher who had been terminated and whose case is in arbitration. She also explained "Make A Statement Day," and Ms. Melnikoff's vital role in making it happen.

Captain Hoerr was unable to say much about the lawsuit that retired policeman Barry Ward has brought against Chief Richard McLaughlin and the Town. He offered to go to the federal court house and get copies of Ward's filing. A couple members of the commission expressed their gratitude to Peter, but did not think that was necessary since this litigation is in process and has not been resolved.

Captain Hoerr spoke about a recent case of a Black magazine solicitor that had been the subject of letters to the editor of the *Belmont Citizen-Herald*. Captain Hoerr read from the report of the police officer at the scene. He also provided context on the long history of commercial door-to-door solicitations and why the Town adopted a By-law regulating them, which he was involved in writing with then Selectman William Brownsberger. Prior to this meeting, Captain Hoerr had sent members of the Commission a recent article in *The Atlantic* about traveling sales crews. He pointed out there had been similar articles in newspapers and magazines over many years.

6. Jirair Hovsepian was congratulated for being honored as Volunteer of the Year by the Belmont Media Center.

7. The next Commission meeting will be on Thursday, December 3, 2015 at 7 PM. Carl Brauer said he would be unable to attend because he would be in New York.

8. The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Carl Brauer