

## **Dedham Human Rights Commission**

Meeting Minutes: December 12, 2022, 7:00 p.m.

In attendance: Joe Borsellino, Vicki Castagnola, Julie Jeannetti, Jim Kaufman, Chris Kelly, Sean Molloy, Diane Barry Preston, Sgt. Jason Sullivan.

**NEXT MEETING:** Monday, January 9, 2023 at 7 p.m. at Town Hall

**Public Comment:** Dedham resident Brian Keaney requested that the HRC denounce a recent social media posting by former member, Diane Loud, and asked that the HRC work on a separate statement affirming its commitment to recognizing the ability of local religious communities to celebrate their traditions. HRC Chair Joe Borsellino noted that the HRC would be drafting and voting on an official statement regarding Ms. Loud's post that night, and affirmed that the HRC remains committed to supporting and respecting religious traditions and religious communities in our town, noted that the HRC already works closely with many of Dedham's churches and religious groups, that we value these partnerships, and that we will work to remedy any harms to these relationships that may have been caused by Ms. Loud's post.

Dedham resident Scott Mingels commented that he supports the HRC and the good work that it does in the community.

### **New Members**

Vicki Castagnola, who is the librarian at the ECEC, has been appointed by the School Committee to fill their seat on the HRC. Vicki introduced herself to the group. Other recently appointed members, including Sargent Jason Sullivan of the Dedham Police Department, and Julie Jeannetti, who is serving in an at-large seat, re-introduced themselves to those who had not previously met them.

### **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Community Celebration**

The 2023 MLK Day Celebration will once again take place at Dedham Middle School on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Monday, January 16, from 5 – 8 p.m.

Jason reported that Jeanne Johnson, DPS Food Service Director, will provide the DPS food van to allow collecting of foods being donated by local businesses for the celebration. Several DPS food service workers have also agreed to help out at the celebration. Jason has secured a \$250 donation from Ocean State Job Lots, two cookie trays from MIT Endicott House, and two trays of wings from Halfway Café. He is still working with Dunkin Donuts, Starbucks, King's, and the Midway Café on additional donations.

Jim Kaufman has contacted Legal Seafoods, Diane Barry Preston has spoken with Blue Ribbon BBQ, and Julie has spoken with Horse Thieves Tavern; decisions are pending from each location.

Joe says that Rob Blaney has arranged for the Youth Commission to provide many pizzas and bottled waters, that Salem Food Market will provide at least 3-4 trays of food, and that Café Bagel has agreed to provide a large bag of bagels.

Chris heard from Wegman's, which has agreed to provide a \$100 gift card. He will follow-up with Stop & Shop and Star Market, which were both considering donations.

Jason will apply the Ocean State gift card to securing table cloths, plates, cups, utensils, serving spoons, name tags, markers, and take out containers. Chris will use the Wegman's gift card to purchase veggie and fruit trays and salad. Joe and Vicki will bring coolers, and Jason will approach the American Legion for an ice donation.

Keynote speaker Edith Basile is confirmed; Joe plans to take her to dinner and Jim will provide Dedham Pottery as a thank you gift.

Joe confirmed that Tanya's Dance Studio will present two performances, "El Cantante" and "I Know Where I've Been" from "Hairspray." More than 20 members of the Dedham Choral Society will perform two songs, likely to be "Lift Every Voice and Sing" and "Balm in Gilead." Soloist Nola Hood may perform. The Dedham High School Band will perform two pieces, including Omar Thomas's "In Memoriam" from the suite "We Will Know." Joe Borsellino Jr. and the Dedham High Jazz Band will perform "Go Tell It on the Mountain."

Joe, Julie, and Margaret Adams met with Dedham Public Schools faculty to discuss the student art and essay contests. Students will be asked to write or draw something on the theme "On Whose Shoulders Do We Stand?" Art pieces will be exhibited at the event, and all essays will be on display as well. The DPS team will also select one student from each grade level (elementary, middle, and high school) who will read their essay at the event.

HRC Emcees for the event will be Joe, Sean, Julie, and Jason. All members of the HRC are asked to arrive early on Monday to help set-up the event. Diane Barry Preston will be stationed in the library with the local organizations that have agreed to set-up informational tables at the event (these include Dedham Coalition for Equity and Inclusion, Dedham Museum, Mother Brook Arts, several local churches, and Dedham Public Library.)

### **Statement**

The group discussed a recent angry and profane social media posting made by now-former member Diane Loud in response to the town controversy surrounding the library's since-reversed decision not to set-up a Christmas Tree as part of the Christmas decorations at the Endicott branch of the Library. Diane Loud resigned by email from the HRC immediately after posting.

The group reviewed comments from the public to the HRC that followed Diane's posting, many of them blaming the HRC for her actions and/or the tree decision. While all recognized that the HRC was not involved in either situation, the group was uniformly appalled by Diane's

comments, tone, and language in her posting and unanimously agreed that we should release a statement condemning and disavowing them. Together, the group worked on the language for the statement and agreed to provide it the next day to the *Dedham Times*, to the Town Information Officer for wider distribution, and to post it on the HRC Facebook page, which had been taken down earlier in the day in response to a flood of sometimes threatening and often obscene posts made by people across the US who were enraged by Diane's comments, which had been reported on local, national, and international news outlets.

### **Anti-Semitism**

The group discussed the rise in antisemitism recently witnessed throughout the country and the HRC's possible methods of combating this. Joe mentioned that an organization of human rights commissions across the South Shore and Cape Cod have already begun working on the issue, and he shared some of their initiatives. Jim noted some of the ways that antisemitism is historically expressed, and will share thoughts on possible actions at our next meeting. Jim also agreed to attend the next Zoom meeting of the South Shore and Cape Cod HRCs with Joe, when the focus will be on their antisemitism efforts.

### **I Am Dedham**

The December episode of "I Am Dedham," which had been scheduled to be hosted by Diane Loud, was canceled. In place of our usual episode in January, we will ask Dedham TV to attend and film the MLK Celebration. The February episode will be hosted by Leslie Sattler, former HRC representative from the Youth Commission, and will focus on Title IX.

### **HRC Officer Elections**

The next elections for HRC Officer positions (Chair, Vice Chair, and Clerk) will be held in July.