

EDINA HUMAN RIGHTS & RELATIONS COMMISSION
TUESDAY, MAY 27, 2008
7:00 PM - MAYOR'S CONFERENCE ROOM

Members Present

Luis Bartolomei
Mary Brindle
Emery Erickson
Colleen Feige
JoAnn McGuire
Andy Otness
Wayne Prochniak
Russell Stanton

Members Absent

Peter Brauer
Idelle Longman

Guest

Mike Siitari

Staff

Susan Heiberg

Mike Siitari, Chief of Police, was introduced and welcomed. He handed out a sheet as an overview of the last three years listing crimes of bias, and he noted that there is no discernable pattern. During the year, the State of Minnesota requires quarterly reports of bias crimes from municipalities.

- There was one reported bias crime in 2005. It involved a door-to-door salesman accosted and slandered with derogatory names by a man in a pickup truck. The suspect was located, jailed and charged with terroristic threats, assault and DWI.
- There were two reported bias crimes in 2006. The first was about an unknown person stapling photocopies of the prophet Mohammed in lewd poses and cartoons to a picnic table near the Islamic Institute of MN on Washington Avenue. There was no additional evidence, and no further problems were reported. The second one concerned a rock thrown through a man's car window while at work in Edina with a letter attached containing derogatory remarks. The victim declined investigation.
- There were three reported bias crimes in 2007. The first one concerned a Native American couple subjected to a racially-derogatory tirade while riding on a MTC bus near Southdale. After the perpetrator exited the bus and drove away, attempts to locate her were unsuccessful, and the offer to prosecute was declined. The second event involved an Egyptian man who claimed discrimination when the AMC theater manager escorted him out.

The manager stated that the man had been moving from theater to theater. Without sufficient evidence, criminal charges were not pressed. Finally, an Edina business was burglarized and spray-painted with racial graffiti. A recently-terminated employee was eventually charged with the crime.

The Chief continued with the following observations:

- At the Yorkdale Townhomes, there were no decent athletic programs until CommonBond came in and created the Advantage Center.
- In the Parklawn area, there has been a big turn-over, with younger groups coming in.
- Vagrants are rare in Edina, and there are no long-term options here for them. However, the Police would help them find services.
- The partnership with Cornerstone is an ongoing success. They are called at the scene and provide wonderful services. The Police always hand out cards regarding bias crimes which have Cornerstone's name and number. Cornerstone's expertise helps to stop key offenders.
- The Police are seeing more vulnerable, elderly adults, as well as an increased number of garbage houses. The Building Department and Fire keep track of foreclosures along with Police and watch for issues such as pipes bursting.
- Traffic enforcement keeps crime down.
- Southdale could become an issue because of the relocation of gangs from the Mall of America.

Progress Reported on the RPC Care Team Model

Member Erickson shared that Deborah Paone and Val Burke have been planning and developing a module for other organizations to replicate their own enhanced care team model. The next step will be to host an invitational meeting to provide information and identify three to five organizations who would participate. As a result, each of these organizations would be provided support in the amount of \$500.

Technical assistance will be given through June of 2009, at which time the process will be completed and a final report developed. The model

will produce teams of volunteers supporting older persons to help them remain independent.

Minutes Approved

Member Otness seconded Member McGuire's motion to approve the minutes of April 22, 2008; the motion carried.

Strategic Planning Discussed

Chair Bartolomei indicated that the Commission should work to expand its visibility in the community and that communication needs to be improved with the School District, beginning with a joint meeting. At this meeting, an annual report and the Commission's strategic plan could be shared. To expedite this, the following sub-committee will meet to develop a revised strategic plan by September: Members Brindle, Feige and Stanton, and Chair Bartolomei.

2009 Funding Process Determined

The following assignments were made, linking providers to Commissioners as liaisons:

- Cornerstone - Member McGuire
- Women in Transition - Member Prochniak
- Courage Center - Member Feige
- Normandale Center - Member Brindle
- The Bridge - Member Brindle
- Store to Door - Member Otness
- Minneapolis Mediation Program - Member Brauer
- VEAP - Members Brindle & Stanton
- Senior Community Services - Member Feige
- Chrysalis - Member Longman
- Edina Resource Center - Member Stanton
- RPC - Member Erickson
- Family Literacy - Member Otness
- Storefront - Member Brauer

At the June Commission meeting, the Commissioners will review the proposals, and the assigned liaisons will field questions to the providers who will answer these questions in writing before the hearing on July

22nd. On July 29th, the Commission will meet to prepare a 2009 proposed human services budget for the City Council's consideration.

Joint Meeting Date Set with the Community Council

The Commissioners agreed that it would be important to convene a meeting with the Edina Community Council. Tuesday, September 16th, is the kick-off meeting for the Council after the summer break. Members Brindle and Brauer will connect with Val Burke to see if the joint meeting could be arranged at that time. The meeting would be held at 7:30 in the morning at the Community Center.

Amnesty International Chapter Concert Held at Centennial Lakes

Member Brindle reported that the fundraising concert held by the High School chapter of Amnesty International was a success. Approximately 150 people attended, and \$1400 was raised from donations and the two Edina Rotaries. These gifts will help support the efforts of the Genocide Intervention Network to combat the atrocities in Darfur and the Internally Displaced Persons camps in Chad.

Member Prochniak suggested that the Commission contact Rachael Pream Grenier, staff adviser for the High School Amnesty International Chapter, to invite their group to a Commission meeting in order to learn what they are planning and offer to lend support. Perhaps this could take place at the October meeting.

Table-Top Display Suggested

Member Prochniak urged the Commissioners to consider the value of a table-top display to be used whenever there are gatherings or events at which the Commission's presence would be of value. The mode of design could be taken from the newly-created flyer and brochure.

Upcoming Retirement of the Police Chief Discussed

The word is out that the Police Chief may be retiring this fall. Member Prochniak suggested that the Commission draft a letter to him for the sake of urging his replacement to continue the tradition of raising awareness of the Commission's presence in the community.

Member Prochniak seconded Chair Bartolomei's motion that Chair Bartolomei touch base with Gordon Hughes regarding this action; the motion carried.

Martin Luther King Day Activity Discussed

Member Brindle reminded the Commissioners how successful last January's event was at St. Patrick's Church regarding Darfur and the video "The Devil Came on Horseback." The question was raised about having an annual event which would coincide with school assignments during the week of Martin Luther King (MLK), Jr., Day.

Member Otness seconded Member Feige's motion that the providers requesting funding for 2009 be solicited for suggestions for MLK day activities and that St. Patrick's Church again be contacted; the motion carried. Member Brindle will contact Cappy Moore regarding the availability of the church.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:25 PM.

Respectfully,

Luis Bartolomei, Chair
Edina Human Rights & Relations Commission

LB/sh