

Franklin Township Human Relations Commission
Minutes of January 28, 2008 Meeting
Historic Conference Room, Public Library

Commissioners Present: Chairman Gary Rosenthal, Ike Agudosi, Marilyn Altman, Nora Q. Catiis, Willie Good, Edna Arguello-Hitchner, Rebecca White Johnson, Murray Rothblatt, John Tibbs, Mylo Thompson

Absent: Robert Stone, Det. Sean Hebbon

Liaison Present: Councilman R. Prasad

Chairperson, Gary Rosenthal, called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.

Copies of the Minutes of the November 26, 2007, which were distributed by mail, were approved.

Discussions:

- After welcoming the new Commissioners, Rebecca White Johnson and Marilyn Altman, everyone gave brief self-introductions.
- Gary advised that Chandrakant Desai tendered his resignation as Commissioner because of other responsibilities (one being as Professor, Indo-American Literacy) that preclude him from attending HRC meetings on a regular basis.
- Councilman Prasad advised that on Tuesday, January 22, the town council approved a resolution introduced by him to put up a Peace and Non-Violence Memorial (statues) to Mahatma Gandhi and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in the township Municipal Complex. *See attached e-mail copy, dated 1/25 for further details.* Copies of photos taken of similar Memorials in Riverside, California and photos at the King Center in Atlanta were passed around and/or distributed.

Murray Rothblatt made a motion, which was unanimously passed, that the HRC support this Memorial project (expected to cost at least \$250,000), and for us to collectively come up with fund-raising ideas.

Additionally, Councilman Prasad remarked on one of the township's slogan in the past: (SPIFIY: "Showing Pride In Franklin, It's Yours). In this regard, he advised that he is arranging for framed portraits of Benjamin Franklin to hang prominently in all public buildings of the township.

- Murray commented that the attendance at the January 21 MLK Breakfast at the Double Tree was very impressive (at least 600 people) and he highlighted the importance of HRC's making a presentation at next year's event to make people more aware of HRC's mission and existence. He remarked that the MLK event is what HRC is all about. Gary advised that we should aim to have an HRC table at next year's event.
- John Tibbs advised and thanked the HRC for helping make it possible for the seniors at Parkside to have their much-needed convenient voting place.
- He also voiced the need for low-income housing in Franklin Township.

- Councilman Prasad mentioned the importance of improving areas like Hamilton Street, similar to what was accomplished in the New Brunswick area. This would include a youth development center as well as the township's Economic Development's assistance in overall business development in the area.
- Mylo made a motion, which was unanimously passed, to formally ratify the scheduled HRC meetings for 2008. (*see attached Resolution dated January 28*).
- Nora Catiis made a brief report on the Franklin Youth Initiative (FYI), the Community-based Task Force formed in the township in August 2007 as a proactive approach in getting Franklin citizens involved in helping solve youth violence and stop gang activity. This Task Force was created in the wake of the two homicides in July 2007 that occurred within a 36-hour period.

In addition, she invited everyone to attend the January 31 and February 4 –7 P.M. meetings at the Senior Community Center; the January 31 meeting will specifically address Mentoring while the February 4 meeting will provide updates from the 8 sub-committees of the FYI Task Force. See attached report dated January 28 for further details.

John Tibbs said the problem in this township is the lack of recreational facilities for the youth. As a result of lack of facilities to properly utilize their time, some of the young people inevitably get into trouble and become easy targets of gangs.

He expressed dissatisfaction in young people of the Parkside areas having lost their previous time slot to play sports on Saturday mornings in the Naaman Williams Park (located in the Parkside area). It appears that the time slot has been assigned to an adult group's cricket team. He said that he has contacted and will clarify matters with Alice Osipowicz of Parks and Recreation Department.

Gary asked John to provide him with more information so that further clarification, and resolution, in a collective manner, can be obtained from Parks and Recreation department.

As well, he encouraged John and everyone present to attend the FYI Task Force meetings to voice any concerns, opinions and ideas relating to the FYI initiative. It is noted that a number of commissioners are represented in the 8 FYI sub-committees.

- Marilyn Altman advised that as a means of working with the youth, the Democratic Committee is in the process of initiating some kind of a youth-oriented training program in the Plumbers' Union.

The next meeting is on Monday, February 25 at 7 p.m., same location. The meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Nora Q. Catiis, Secretary

Attachments: R. Prasad's E-mail of 1/25/2008; N.Catiis' Memo re FYI dated 1/28/2008 (with 3 pcs. of information); Resolution Authorizing Adoption of HRC's Meeting Schedule 2008