

Franklin Township Human Relations Commission
***Corrected* Minutes of the July 28, 2008 Meeting**
Historic Conference Room, Public Library

Commissioners Present: Gary Rosenthal, Chairman; Marilyn Altman; Edna Arguello-Hitchner; Nora Q. Catiis; Rebecca White Johnson; Alvin Levine; Bob Stone; Mylo Thompson; John Tibbs

Liaison Present: Police Officer Ordel Taylor

Absent: Murray Rothblatt (excused); Willie Goods; Ike Agudosi; Councilman Rajiv Prasad (Liaison); Ex-Officio Junior Commissioners: Naphtali Brooks; Sheena Ranade

Chairman Rosenthal called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

1. Everyone was reminded that the “*Week of the People 2008*” starts Saturday, August 2, ending on Saturday, August 9.

Nora distributed copies of the week’s schedule including the Human Relations brochure, which she created and requested Janie Dong of the Township Manager’s office to duplicate for distribution at the Tuesday’s “Getting to Know Franklin/National Night Out ” and Wednesday’s (HRC-coordinated) staging of the drama documentary “*Yesterday I Died*” at the Franklin Middle School.

Rebecca volunteered to make HRC nametags for use during the events and Nora advised she would send to Rebecca the commissioners’ names as well as the Logo to use.

2. As a follow up on the “First Suburbs Network” topic discussed at a previous meeting, Bob Stone referred everyone to the First Suburbs Network website (www.opensoc.org.) and read a summary report, a copy of which is attached (*Attachment 1*).

3. After sharing opinions and ideas, everyone agreed that it would be beneficial for HRC to invite a First Suburbs Network representative to have a better idea of this concept and how applicable, if any, it could be for Franklin Township.

4. Al Levine reported the following:

a) He was recently informed that certain realtors are reportedly turning clients away from Franklin Township, basically “maligning” the town's having been chosen “#5 Best Place to Live” designation. He advised that he would investigate further and will advise should further action from the HRC be needed.

b) With John Tibbs as their guide, Alvin and Lynn Levine, with Councilwoman Teresa Danile recently toured the Parkside Housing neighborhood to have an idea of the overall condition/environment of the area. This is further to John Tibbs' comment on the plight of the lower income residents and the problem with rising rent.

c) Al further advised that he and John attended Rep. Rush Holt’s recent town hall meeting in Franklin Township and was able to start a dialogue with Rep. Holt’s office with respect to this problem.

d) Following all of the above, a letter to Gary and HRC was sent by Hazel Davies, Executive Director of Housing Authority inviting HRC to attend their August 13 7PM meeting. Nora volunteered to scan the letter and distribute copies to everyone by email. A copy of this letter is attached (*Attachment 2*)

e) Some commissioners expressed interest in attending with Gary and car-pooling is being planned.

5. Opinions and ideas were exchanged on dealing with the problems in the poor areas of Franklin Township (principally Parkside). It is important to rehabilitate and provide community-based services to the residents, especially for the youth who are vulnerable and are caught in the vicious cycle of poverty and crime.

FT Police Officer Ordell Taylor provided updating information on Police Department efforts to protect the community, giving helpful insights on the problem of juvenile delinquency especially in the poor areas.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM. Next meeting will be on Monday, August 25, same time and place.

Attached:

Attachment 1: "First Suburbs Network" Summary Report

Attachment 2: Franklin Township's Housing Authority Letter dated July 28, 2008