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SOMERVILLE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

January 5, 2006, 6:30 p.m.
Tufts Administration Building, 167 Holland Street, Somerville
Meeting Minutes

Members present: Herby Duverné, Susan Goldstein, Michael Koehler, Nathan Lemmon, Mary Lu Mendonca, Kevin O'Malley, Yvette Verdieu

Non-members present: Rev. Ben Echevarria, Martha Costa (Police Liaison)

I. Administrative matters

- Minutes from January meeting accepted.
- Director's Report: Mary Lu reviewed her activity report for the last month. She has been working primarily on organizing our Martin Luther King, Jr. Day event, which is coming up on January 16th. She also reported that Melissa McWhinney received another leaflet from the same white supremacist group that targeted Somerville last summer. She is concerned that this hateful message is not random, but rather is directed specifically at her household because of their family's interfaith makeup and/or the multiracial makeup of their tenants' family. Martha said that the complaint had come into the police department and that she spoke with Melissa shortly after it happened.

II. MLK, Jr. Day Event

- Update from Mary Lu: almost everything is ready to go. Aru Manrique has been making arrangements for interpreters and has confirmed most of them. The Mayor's Office rejected our request to pay for interpreters. Yvette confirmed the Haitian choir and Ben will speak again with the Brazilian singer. Mary Lu announced that Senator Barrios has requested the chance to speak at the event. The Commission decided to deny his request, noting that we have a very full program and allowing one politician to speak will open us up to a flood of requests.
- Deval Patrick has been confirmed as keynote speaker. We have not yet asked anyone to introduce the award recipients. It was decided at our last meeting that we will contact Attorney General Reilly to ask if he will issue a citation for Alice Comack, the individual award recipient and a personal friend of the AG. Mary Lu suggested that we ask him, in the alternative, to introduce Alice; if he accepts, we could ask the mayor

to introduce SCALE. The Commission decided that if AG Reilly could not introduce Alice, we would ask Police Chief Bradley to introduce her and Superintendent Pierantozzi to introduce SCALE while the mayor makes the opening speech to welcome everyone.

- Commissioners spent a great deal of time reviewing and editing a draft event schedule prepared by Mary Lu.
- Commissioners discussed the division of tasks for the day of the event. Susan will take care of the food and direct people towards childcare. After much discussion, Susan and Mike declined the job of emcee and Kevin agreed to do it. Mary Lu will get him information about everyone on the program via e-mail in advance. Nate, Mike, and Yvette will help greet people at the door and pass out programs. Several commissioners, as well as some people from the Early Childhood Advisory Council, will participate in a reading of King's quotes early on in the program.
- We still need to work on publicity. Mary Lu will get flyers to all of the schools. Nate will create a press release. Cesar will write a letter to the Journal after the event to highlight it and thank everyone for participating.

IV. Discussion on Commissioner Statements

- The Commission agreed that continuing to table the discussion is not useful. We all understand the premise of speaking on one's own behalf as an individual versus speaking on behalf of the Commission as a member. We can take this up again in more detail if issues arise in the future.