

Cambridge GLBT Commission

February 23rd, 2012 Minutes

Dana Zircher taking minutes in the absence of Kevin.

Commissioners Present: John Gintell, Mike McKenna, Robert Coats, Steven Lee, Mal Malme, Lesley Phillips, Aren Stone, Jeff Walker, Caitlin Drechsler, Dana Zircher, Gregory Grays-Thomas, Maggie Giles, Neil MacInnes-Barker, and Rebecca Caira-Davila.

Commissioners Absent: (excused) Bob Parlin, Kevin Shpritzer, Marianne Mondt

Old Business:

Motion to Approve last month's minutes:

Motion to approve – Approved.

Call for additions – None.

Welcome and Introductions

We welcomed our six new Commissioners to tonight's meeting: Caitlin Drechsler, Dana Zircher, Gregory Grays-Thomas, Maggie Giles, Neil MacInnes-Barker, and Rebecca Caira-Davila.

Mayor Report

Great news, Cambridge now officially has a Mayor, Henrietta Davis.

She is supportive of the LGBT community. John knows Henrietta quite well and has already reached out to her to offer congratulations. He will set up a meeting with her and Commission members.

Background information: She's been on the City Council for 9 terms. She's been a strong advocate for elder issues in the past and chaired the Silver Ribbon Committee and she will likely give that a high priority. Several of the Commission members will assemble and meet with her in a couple of weeks after she's had time to settle into her new job. In more good news for our community Denise Simmons was elected Vice-Mayor.

Communications

Social Media

Jeff - We need to develop policies regarding the use of our social media. We should establish these before we start using Twitter. It's very easy to send out a mass message which doesn't actually reflect the city's position. What is the current policy? – None, at this time any of the Commissioners are able to post as the Commission. It would be interesting to review the guidelines of other organizations' policies. Do any of us have policies regarding communications in their other circles?

Perhaps we can all submit our existing guidelines and examine the good / bad.

Doesn't Cambridge City government already have guidelines? They are likely not as refined as we'd like.

Rebecca will assemble a mash-up of the related organization's policies once they have been submitted.

What are the goals of the Commission's communications? We should work to develop these goals. We also need to have policies for what it is appropriate and inappropriate for us to post, especially given that we are part of the City of Cambridge. We will revisit and finalize a policy next month.

Perhaps establishing a moderation group to help control the Commission's messaging? We should be careful to weigh the benefits of free communication rather restricting anonymous postings. Currently the Commission allows open posting by the Commissioners.

Mike notes that we also have an open Yahoo group email list.

How should we proceed regarding the use of Twitter? For now we should likely do double postings in the meantime until we have a better understanding of what the distinctions are between the different communications models.

We could use group tweets for now.

Rebecca suggested using communications software to manage our unified messaging. Can these packages also send email - not sure? Hootsuite.com is one of the services being suggested.

Mike will set up the accounts since he just set up the Twitter accounts.

Web Site

John is still trying to find out if we can update the website ourselves. He is having trouble getting responses from the city on this.

We need to get a rolling list of annual accomplishments. Minutes are already being posted to the website. It would be greatly beneficial to have a summary roll-up posted rather than requiring folks to read the meeting minutes.

Call to someone to write up the previous year's highlights? Aren will work on this.

We have a new phone number which gets forwarded directly to an email address, which forwards to John's email address. Mike is looking into other options.

Neil suggested using Google phone as an alternative. John - the Commission has used Google phone in the past and we wanted an official city phone number.

Business Cards

Marianne has designed a business card.

We would like to have them soon since we have several events coming up during which we might want to use them.

John (printing) and Marianne (design) will continue to work on this.

Neil: Perhaps we could review the font sizes and choices. We will take this off-line.

Seniors Project

LGBT Elders in a Changing World Conference: At Salem State University, March 16. Put on by Salem State, The LGBT Aging Project, and North Shore Elder Services. Cost: \$95, over 60-\$45. We can get reimbursed by the city from our budget. John, Aren, and Jeff are planning to attend, more are welcome.

GenSilent Film Screening

Mal, Steven, and Aren have been working on this. We are currently looking at the library as a possible venue. We have been collaborating with Kate Thomas at Cambridge Somerville Elder Services and are getting her input on how to best drive attendance and marketing etc.

We would love to get the new mayor and other City officials to attend the screening.

We are aiming for an evening date in May or June. We need to be aware of and avoid the Cadbury Common LGBT Senior Dinner held on 4th Wednesdays of the month.

Mass Equality is also trying to host a screening of GenSilent. They're doing theirs in Boston at Fenway Health. We had discussed the target as city employees and officials and Cambridge residents in general.

We weren't planning on charging admission, however if we go the fund-raising route, we must use the high school because the library won't allow us to charge. We could consider getting sponsors for the event to raise revenues. In the past events like this have set upper bounds of say \$5k. We should have a sharp focus of what we are raising money for. John thinks that it would be difficult to raise money since we are a city organization. Mal suggests that it would be best if we could host this event without charging.

When to schedule the event? Kate suggested that weeknights tend to be the best. We would also need to be out by 9:00. Perhaps a 5:30-7:00 reception with food? We could ask to have someone from the production attend for the Q&A session afterwards. The cost of renting the film is \$499 for the film plus a 15% discount for non-profits. We have been informed that we are eligible for this discount.

The library only allows food in the reception area and not in the library.

Fund raising is restricted to reimbursement of the costs of the event.

We could fund this project from our budget, which must be exhausted by June 30th.

Perhaps we can raise funds on behalf of the LGBT Aging Project.

John mentioned that the city's Diversity Committee is interested in holding a separate showing for city employees during work hours. The best case attendance for these events is ~30 people.

Brochure and facts sheet

Steven is producing new brochures.

Drafts to be mailed out for review at next month's meeting.

We can distribute these at LGBT events and other meetings regarding LGBT aging.

Pride Brunch

Pride Brunch - Gay Pride morning the mayor and the Commission host the PRIDE lunch. We should start the planning for the PRIDE brunch soon.

Will we get support from the City on the planning of this event? This is largely dependent on who the Mayor's Chief of Staff is. Jeff Walker offered a good bit of support to the logistics of planning this event. Lesley volunteered to interface with the Mayor's Office.

Do we want to have a presence in the parade? Often there is a problem with conflicting participation with other marching organizations. Perhaps there are a couple of organizations that we could partner with in order to have a decent showing. Cautionary note: Having a small presence may be 'sad', we should plan to invest our energy in the award and the brunch.

Do we have to have the brunch the same day as Pride? There is a small amount of conflict with the brunch and then rushing out to the parade. Perhaps we could hold the brunch the Saturday before Pride because Boston has a tendency to drag Pride out for a full week. Boston does flag raisings, etc. Positive note: Last year we ended the ceremonies earlier than usual and had no problem getting to the event on time.

The room is split on whether to have the brunch on the same day as the parade. We can reflect on these choices and perhaps have a vote at the next meeting. It was noted that the Mayor may have an opinion about this, since it is sponsored by the Mayor's office. Lesley and John will talk with Mayor Davis about the Brunch.

Who do we typically invite to the Pride brunch? The brunch was started by the Cambridge Lavender Alliance and the Mayor's office. We normally get the award recipients and their friends. Some folks who have been coming forever, we've partnered with Family Equality in the past. We often have invited speakers, we have had local authors in the past and they tend to bring their own audiences as well. Attendance has been in the range of ~100-200 people.

Bayard Rustin Service Award

This award is given by the Commission at the Pride Brunch and recognizes a person of color with an outstanding history of service to the GLBT community. Last year's award, the first, was given posthumously to Rev. Peter Gomes.

John – The Peace Commission is hosting an event on March 17th in honor of the 100th anniversary of Rustin's birth and this would be a good venue to publicize this year's award and the call for nominations.

We will need to develop a timeline for the selection process. Jeff and Gregory will be on the committee for this year's award.

Last year we decided that we would have a plaque in City Hall with the award recipient's names. The Historical Commission has to approve any permanent additions to the décor of City Hall and have said that they will not approve any more plaques. We could find another city building to post the plaque.

Youth Pride

Robert suggested that we participate in this year's Youth Pride.

Mal will look into having a table at Youth Pride.

BAGLY (Boston Alliance for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Youth) hosts a GLBT Youth Prom every year. Donations collected at Youth Pride go towards the Prom. Youth Pride is now being coordinated by Boston Pride. Could we be a sponsor of these events?

Youth Project Proposal

The Commission has worked in the past with the high school in re-establishing Project 10 East, the school's GSA. Several years ago we made a proposal for surveying schools and organizations that work with younger kids but didn't have the resources to act on it. John proposed a Cambridge Afterschool Assessment Project to survey the many city-run and private after school organizations to assess how welcoming and supportive they are of LGBT youth, parents, and staff.

While there are new laws addressing bullying, etc., these new laws don't apply to after school programs.

This effort would consume a full-time employee for approximately 3 months.

Aren raises the concern that we should ensure that we are able to handle both the Seniors Project as well as a new project. Perhaps the timing of getting new Commissions is a perfect opportunity.

Lesley: Generally a good idea, however it may be important to note that this project wouldn't really materialize until the new September term. That should ease some of the pressure of trying to ramp up too quickly.

Neil has stated that he is available for Youth Pride, After School Assessment as well as the Pride event.

Maggie is interested in working on this project as she is currently working on a similar project for her work.

John, it's important to get someone in the city organization accountable to seeing this succeed in order to gain traction. If we define a very specific set project goals and details, getting someone hired to fulfill those project description would be ideal.

Steven is looking into getting a grant.

Sam Seidel (former City Councilor) and Nancy Tauber (former School Committee member) were very active in the city's Commission on Out of School Time. Perhaps they could be contacted.

We should reach out to Melody Brazo (School Department's Family Liaison to the LGBT Community) and Ed Byrnes (Cambridge Rindge and Latin High School's Diversity Coordinator) to see how much of this data already exists.

Aren will contact Melody and Ed.

Fundraising / Grants

Steven: No update for tonight's meeting; let's push this out to next month for an update.

Gender Neutral Bathrooms

The Commission has been working with the city on a gender neutral bathroom policy. Steven and John had copies of the complicated state plumbing code that concerns gender and number of bathrooms. There is specific language that states the requirements based on capacity. The city's lawyer (Vali Buland) working on this said that she would have a draft of a policy in a few days.

344 Cambridge St. is currently considered in violation of the code. They are looking for a variance so that they do not need to alter the current implementation.

Call for issues from the floor

None

Public comments

The 2nd annual event for 'Lawyers for Transgender Rights' which is a subcommittee of the LGBT Bar Association will be occurring soon. This event benefits the Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition (MTPC). Is our Commission willing to sign on as a sponsor of this event either monetary or in name only? John - Likely impossible to get the city to put money into the event. Perhaps there are membership options that could in turn support to MTPC. (Note from Aren—we are already an MTPC Partner)

Lesley has spoken with Somerville's new GLBT liaison, who would be interested in speaking to the Commission.

Mal - Another Country Production has a show coming out about equal marriage and a conservative congregation. Flyers for the event passed out to the attendees.

End of meeting

Action Items:

John: set up meeting with Mayor Davis, arrange business card printing ASAP, keep checking into website moderation

Aren: list of last year's accomplishments, contact Melody Brazo and Ed Byrnes re Afterschool assessment

Mike: working on social media management and options for managing phone and email

Rebecca: collect and coordinate social media/communication policies

Marianne: business card design (let's finalize ASAP)

Mal: Youth Pride table

Steven: new brochure

Maggie: coordinate workplace work with Afterschool Assessment Project

Neil: wants to work on Youth Pride, Pride Brunch, Afterschool Assessment Project

Jeff, Gregory: work on Bayard Rustin award

Lesley, John: Talk with Mayor Davis about Pride Brunch

Aren, Steven, Mal: continue organizing Gen silent screening

Steven, Marianne: researching grants, especially for new Afterschool Assessment Project

All: Look for (and send to Rebecca or group) social media/communication policies from work or organizations, Think about and talk at next meeting about: goals of the Commissions communication vehicles, policies for Commission about posting to social media (and communicating as Commission members in general), Do we want to keep FB and Twitter postings open to all Commissioners or do we want a filter/moderator, Pride Brunch—do we want to keep it on the morning of Pride or change it to a different time

Still needing caretakers: Find out about becoming a sponsor of Youth Pride, Boston Pride, Youth Prom, contact members from the Commission on Out of School Time for input about our Afterschool Assessment Proposal