

No Place for Hate Committee
Meeting Minutes
May 5, 2015
5:30 p.m.
120 Washington Street, 3rd Floor

Members Present: Chair Jeff Cohen, Treasurer Lucy Corchado, Shawn Newton, Rebecca Commage, Lt. Conrad Prosniewski.

Guests Present: Allison Miller, Fara Wolfson, Salem Police Chief Mary Bulter, Commission on Disabilities member David Moisan, Commission on Disabilities Co-Chair Andrew LaPointe

Officer Reports:

Chair - April minutes revised (Shawn Newton) and approved unanimously.

- Introduced guest speakers David Moisan & Andrew LaPointe

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Public Comments:

David Mosain of Commission on Disabilities spoke about this being the 25th anniversary of the passing of the ADA (American Disabilities Act) and his traditional role as technician for SATV and the Commission meetings, which are televised and how refreshing it was to be able to speak from the “other side of the table.” He brought up that ~20% of people in Salem are disabled as many have hidden disabilities. He talked about his personal challenges with hearing and sight (not being able to drive) and the perception most who don’t know him have of his being just disabled. Even though he is on disabilities, he works hard at SATV and has a degree from SSU for computer science. He likes to do outreach and quiet advocacy and talked about the isolation someone with a disability can feel in the community. He also covered the concept of no hierarchy among disabilities.

Andy LaPointe, as an “authentic Blind person” (since 1980), educated the Committee about the differences in using a cane versus using a seeing-eye dog, especially with regard to traveling solo. In the course of walking the streets of Salem, people from inconsiderate to very considerate interact with him in a variety of ways. Some will bump into him or even kick his cane, others will state “on your right” or I’m [name], can I assist you across the street.” He appreciates the helpful attitude of the Salem police, especially when walking near construction. Both Andy & David conveyed that the Commission is about being a resource and we talked about those with disabilities not having the added burden of having to explain to others not aware.

Chief Butler talked about the importance of having the right protocols and training, whether sensitivity to those with disabilities, reacting to those potentially overdosing on substance or other issues and we talked briefly about the Community Impact Unit.

Hate Crimes Awareness (Diversity) Program

Shawn and Conrad distributed the current draft of the program and its close to becoming a reality. They talked about how many commit hate crimes but are convicted of others and could be included in the program and the need since not a program mandated by state law in Essex County. For the Committee guests, Conrad gave a history of the process of developing the program and why educating people in lieu of punishment benefits the community at large and those involved in particular. Shawn was asked by Fara about what programs he liked from other states and Allison about those with mental health issues as that her discipline.

Conrad updated the Committee about the ongoing case of the person who was harassing her condo neighbors in the same building because they are gay and Jewish as well as a new case of a Salem Hospital patient who attacked a staff person.

Future Speakers

As Pride is June 20, someone from North Shore Pride will be the guest speaker at the June meeting.

In July, LLC (Latina Leadership Coalition) will give a Powerpoint presentation regarding perceptions of and prejudices towards people in The Point neighborhood.

Upcoming Events

June 20, Pride (No Place for Hate Committee will have a table)

Strategic Planning

Shawn brought up the idea of a strategic planning meeting for the Committee, similar to the one we had in 2014. Those at the meeting agreed and we'll try to do sometime this summer.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, June 2, 2015 at 5:30 P.M.

Adjournment: 6:50 P.M.