



OBSERVER CORPS REPORT

Task Force Against Discrimination -October 19, 2023

Zoom -Recorded

LWVM Observer: Shari Pressman

Members present: Diane Gora and Helaine Hazlett, co-chairs, ex-officio member Chief Dennis King, Deacon John Whipple, Chris Bruell, Scott Marcus, Reece Dahlberg, and Kim Gubelman

Also present: Jay Morrison, liaison to Marblehead Racial Justice Team (MRJT)

Welcome: Rebecca Herve-Lorenzo, a student at MHS, expressed an enthusiastic interest in being one of the two MHS Student Representatives to TFAD. She has been trained by ADL and is of French-Cuban ancestry. Helaine explained that students are asked to submit a short application to the Select Board, followed by a brief interview.

A moment of silence was observed in support of Israel and Jewish people both at home and abroad.

Update on Marblehead Police Department: Chief Dennis King reported that the event at Star of the Sea on Sunday, October 15 had been previously planned before the October 7 attack, but its focus changed after that event. He reported concern about potential counteractivity on Sunday, but there was none. He suggested that a “no backpacks” or searching backpacks rule should be previously stated, not enforced for a single event. Both Leslie Dever and Joe Whipple of Star of the Sea expressed no concern about counteractivity. \$2300 in donations was raised for Combined Jewish Philanthropies (CJP) at the event.

Chief King reassured the community about the measures, both seen and unseen, that he and the department are taking to ensure safety. However, he warned that domestic violence can be triggered by events thousands of miles away and have increased since October 7. Chief King said that extra effort is provided for communal spaces that may be vulnerable, including the two synagogues, JCC, and schools in Marblehead. He also noted that the JCC has been awarded \$130,422 in state allotment for security, part of a large grant to many communities. Massachusetts has the 6th highest per capita antisemitic incidents in the U.S.

He again stressed the MPD's behind the scenes preparation, CJP safety training, work with the ADL, and a federally-produced video about training and security called "The Power of Hello", which he hopes to make available to a wider audience. He thanked his staff but predicts the effort to ensure the safety of the community will be a very big part of his duties for the next year or more.

Chief King will participate in a discussion on "Why We Have Antisemitism and Our Role in Dismantling It" with Pastor James Bixby of Clifton Lutheran and Rabbi Michael Schwartz of Temple Sinai on Sunday, October 22 at Clifton Lutheran Church from 11:00-12:00.

Rebecca reported that there'd been antisemitic incidents at MHS and asked Chief King if the police could do anything. He said they work on every incident and that the school system has been supported.

He reported that he'd spoken with 7th graders and was impressed with the ADL's "phenomenal kit" and with Team Harmony.

Update on Marblehead Public Schools: Diane reported that the October 7 attack has had a big impact on her students. Reece's children didn't mention any changes at school. Both Chief King and Reece mentioned the Lappin Foundation's Butterfly Program, which provides materials for students in Grade 6-12 to commemorate the 1.5 million Jewish children who died in the Holocaust, educates about the dangers of hate and bigotry, and inspires the creation of a more compassionate and peaceful world.

Cultural Council Art Installation: TFAD hasn't fulfilled its commitment to help fund the restoration and maintenance of the Pride Pavement in front of the Visitor's Center because the artist has been away.

Update on International Holocaust Remembrance Day: Helaine will speak to the Select Board about observing Holocaust Remembrance Day at Noon at Abbot Hall on Friday, January 26, 2024.

Update on Asian Pacific American Heritage Month: Kim reported that she is looking to confirm an open space for May 4, 2024 and possibly through the next week for the celebration. She hopes to work with Todd Bloodgood from the School Department and connect to the town website with a visual to call attention to the celebration. Reece volunteered to work with Kim.

Discussion: Marblehead Public Schools Student Reps: Rebecca Herve-Lorenzo and Damilola Graciella Olabisi are possible candidates.

Discussion: Select Board Reminders: Diane and Helaine reminded members to go to Select Board to be sworn in. Members were also reminded that an Open Meeting Laws presentation by Town Counsel Lisa Mead is scheduled for Wednesday, November 1 from 5-p.m. at Abbot Hall.

Update from Marblehead Racial Justice Team: Jay Morrison reported some upset by the lack of recognition of the plight of Palestinians. He also has lived in Israel for a number of years and has close Palestinian friends. MRJT is grateful for Chief King and TFAD's work. Jay and MRJT hope for higher ground discussion and settlement of the conflict other than by war. Discussion followed, with participation by several members of TFAD, including Deacon Whipple.

Future Agenda Items: TFAD will schedule meetings that don't conflict with other town board and committee meetings, especially Select Board and School Committee.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, November 15 at 7:00.