



## OBSERVER CORPS REPORT

### **TASK FORCE AGAINST DISCRIMINATION - 12/13/23**

Zoom and Recording

LWVM Observer: Shari Pressman

Members in Attendance:

Helaine Hazlett (co-chair), Diane Gora (co-chair), Chief Dennis King (Ex-officio member), Chris Buell, Scott Marcus, Reece Dahlberg, Niko King (student representative)

#### **Update on Police Dept. News:**

Chief King reported a threat today at Temple Emanu-El that was determined to be a hoax. The incident was still traumatic, but everyone did what they were supposed to do. Organizations and the MPD are in constant communication and systems are in place at both the state and federal levels. Congregants can feel safe going to temple. Temple Emanu-El went ahead with scheduled evening activities with a cruiser parked out front. Chris Buell, a member of the congregation, commented that “we know we’re in good hands”. Chief King said that “people in Marblehead appreciate the MPD preparedness”. He used the police term “elevated”, which means to proactively figure out what’s going on to prevent things” from happening.

Chief King then focused on a Combined Jewish Philanthropies (CJP) conference a week ago where representatives from synagogues, law enforcement, schools, the FBI, and the US Attorney spoke about how hate crimes are prosecuted at the state and federal levels. Working with law enforcement, everyone has a better idea of what’s going on to prevent incidents from happening.

Significant recent public events such as the Christmas Tree Lighting, the Christmas Walk, and the Menorah Lighting involved community planning with the Police, Highway and Fire Departments. The community showed up with “positive energy and a message of peace”.

Chief King then spoke about an incident in Swampscott. A yard sign was defaced with hateful messaging. He has offered to help with the case, met with ADL and a detective and former colleague from the Salem Police Department who described the Swampscott incident as from inside the community. He’s offered to share intelligence to “root out and hold somebody responsible for a hate crime”.

**Discussion with METCO Director:**

Caja Johnson was ill and unable to attend.

**Update on Marblehead Public Schools:**

Niko King reported that there's been an uptick in afternoon school clubs with fall sports ending. Students have gone to the Senior Center to play volleyball on chairs, held a food drive for Life Bridge, and are raising money for their own classes. Team Harmony will continue with a new faculty advisor.

The major concern among students is the School Committee Sub-Committee on Flags. The committee has meetings during the school day. Students are forced to choose between cutting classes to attend or be excluded from the meetings. School Committee is not listening despite "constant pleas".

Chris Buell attended as a parent and echoed that the meetings are scheduled during the day, which also makes them difficult to attend for working parents.

Suggested responses were to write a letter to the sub-committee or attend a School Committee meeting to speak in person. However, Reece reported that there'd been no follow-up to parents' questions. Students could write individual letters to the sub-committee to be read by someone attending in person.

Discussion will continue at the next TFAD meeting when more information will be reported.

**Update on Holocaust Remembrance Day:**

Helaine reported that the event will be held on Friday, January 19, 2024, at noon on the Upper Abbot Hall lawn. At 6:00pm that evening at Temple Emanu-El, a proclamation will be read by Moses Grader, Acting Chair of the Select Board. There will also be a speaker.

**Update on Asian Pacific American Heritage Month:**

Kim wasn't present at the meeting. The date is May 4.

**Update on Marblehead Public Schools Student Reps:**

Rebecca Herve-Lorenzo has applied for the position and is scheduled tonight on the Select Board's agenda.

**Discussion: February Book Read:**

Reece can order books from Copper Dog Books in Beverly with a quick turnaround. She will also ask Saltwater Book Store in Marblehead. Diane has suggestions for books for K-6 readers.

**Update from Marblehead Racial Justice Team:**

No one was present from MRJT. Pastor James Bixby will be invited to TFAD's next meeting.

**Future Agenda Items:**

TFAD response to School Committee and Sub-Committee

**Next meeting:** Wednesday, January 17, 2024