



OBSERVER CORPS REPORT

TASK FORCE AGAINST DISCRIMINATION—3-27-25

In Person Meeting—Glover School Meeting Room 7:00pm

LWVM Observer: Shari Pressman

Members in Attendance: Helaine Hazlett, Diane Gora (co-chairs), Marblehead Chief of Police Dennis King (ex-officio), Deacon John Whipple, Chris Bruell, Reece Dahlberg

Update on Marblehead Police Department News—Chief King made it clear that the MPD always responds to incidents and must believe that schools are handling “impactful” incidents internally and appropriately. He noted that incidents used to be kept quiet but are more likely to be addressed now. It’s rare to have an incident reach the courts. He also noted that students under age 12 cannot be charged. He later noted that School Resource Officer Sean Sweeney interacts extremely well with students and has earned their trust.

The chief has been participating in “Mosaics” with Rabbi David Meyer, Reverend Jim Bixby and Select Board member Moses Grader once a month. They participate in 50-minute conversations about effective approaches in difficult situations. The discussions are telecast on MHTV. The sessions are models for a safe space for a brave conversation in a time when the chief noted that the “art of civil discourse is disappearing”. The chief noted that the discussion time flies by. (Check MHTV’s listing for “Mosaics” to watch.)

Chief King spoke with the Marblehead Ministerial Association about safety in places of worship. Synagogues’ safety is protected by police presence, but

worshippers of other faiths need to feel safe and comfortable in discussions in their places of worship when opinions may differ.

Marblehead Police Department now has its first, to the best of the chief's knowledge, Latina officer, Taylor Nolasco.

When asked about federal requests to the Marblehead Police Department to detain someone, Chief King noted that civil detainers are not lawful in Massachusetts. (Massachusetts law, in a 2017 SJC decision, protects forcing local law enforcement to make decisions contrary to the public safety interests of their community.) The chief emphasized that his priority is not interfering with the safety of the community.

Chief King will be one of four local officials honored by the ADL at their Essex County Law and Education Day on May 14.

Black History Month Book Read—Reece reported that Matt Fox, Veterans Memorial School principal, contacted parents in February whether they wanted their students to read Punching the Air by Ibi Zoboi and Yusef Salaam. 49 books were requested. A webinar or Zoom discussion is planned for TFAD's next meeting on April 29 for those who'd like to discuss the book.

Task Force Openings—The Select Board interviewed and accepted Maura Dartley-Rocco, Health Educator at MHS, as a member on the TFAD. Two openings remain.

Update on Marblehead Public Schools—Maren Potter's report, read by Reece Flag policy updates:

- School committee meeting 3/20
- All public comment was against flag policy- very moving
- Was supposed to be reading #1 of draft policy but reading #1 was not done and was pushed back. The draft is going back to the drawing board to ask lawyer if the superintendent could suggest flags for them to vote on
- Sarah Fox said the lawyer says because it's government speech only the School Committee members can decide which flags are shown and they can't even get suggestions from anyone outside the committee
- Also she said they need to listen to their lawyer and can't take the advice from other lawyers because they could get in trouble if things go wrong and

- they end up getting sued if they don't listen to their counsel's advice
- Al Williams asked if the superintendent could act as a bridge to get suggestions of flags to hang or not hang to the School Committee and they said they will go back to talk to the lawyer and see at the next subcommittee meeting
 - Brian Ota said "for religious people who believe in traditional family values ... the rainbow flag doesn't support them, and they can't say it out loud because they would get backlash." He is all for the restrictive policy with only the 3 flags (US, MA, POW/MIA)
 - Very disappointing but shows his stance on the issue and opens eyes of the community to his ideas on the pride flag

Discussion re: Asian-American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month

Celebration—Maren sent a report, read by Reece, on progress. Ms Nguyen, the faculty advisor, and Maren have discussed a Small Weekend Event, alternatively called a CreAsian Fair, with arts and crafts from different Asian regions, possibly including crafting 1000 origami cranes, henna, cartooning, fan dancing, and paper lantern making, and offering small snacks. Maren plans to devote her Magic Blocks to creating the cranes while possibly offering it as a month-long community-wide event. She has also proposed the event as a mini-collaboration with the National Art Honor Society (NAHS) at MHS. TFAD will investigate how their help is needed. The event is proposed for the 1st or 2nd Saturday in May in the MHS Cafeteria.

TFAD Social Media—Reece will set up.

Future Agenda Items—Pride Flag-Raising on Saturday, June 21, 2-4 in the afternoon at Abbot Hall.

Next Meeting—Tuesday, April 29