

Founding of the Barnstable County Human Rights Counsel

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I was part of the original volunteer group approved to establish the BCHRC.

The Counsel was organized to respond to residents who felt that they were not being treated fairly and that their rights were being violated. A diverse group with experience and knowledge of these claims, came together to plan and establish an information gathering platform and response to these issues. These included a variety of human rights and civil rights issues but were not specific to one demographic.

The original group debated and assembled a group of diverse representatives whom after much debate were approved as the volunteer action group. I do not recall the details of this process or the 'approval' officials. Most of the individuals that were part of this group no longer on the Cape and I am no longer in contact with them. I did connect with one other original volunteer.

The organizational goal was to attempt to resolve the issues through discussion individually and together with the involved parties. The hope for successful outcome was to keep the problems from unnecessarily escalating to a level of referral to the State or legal actions. MCAD had seen an excessive amount of complaints from the County. Many did not rise to the level of the need for MCAD to process but there were still some concerns.

In addition, a liaison from each Cape town and high school group would also pass on local issues or form in-school groups to discuss and resolve in-house problems.

For the first few years I served as a liaison to the group, as a member of Barnstable County Health and Human Services Advisory Committee. A commission was formed with selecting volunteers for the main body to address the issues. I do not recall attending meetings or participating in any case discussions. I did help to organize and select the chair of the new representatives to replace the vacancies in the action group. Openings were advertised in the

Cape Cod Times. All applicants were offered and interview using a standardized questionnaire. These interviews were followed by a discussion ranking and comparing the results that most matched the skills and experience of the current vacancies. The selection was made by majority vote and all interviewees were formally notified by mail by the BCHS office.

After 20 yrs., this is my best recollection of the formation of the Human Rights Council/Commission. I am happy to answer any questions. This is a time where we need to try to understand and share our issues even though we don't always agree the outcomes of our disagreement.

Jeanne Adams