

## The Houston Commission on Disabilities Meeting Minutes for July 14, 2016

The Houston Commission on Disabilities met on Thursday, July 14, 2016, at the Houston Metropolitan Multi-Service Center (MMSC), 1475 West Gray, Houston, Texas 77019.

Vice Chairman, Eddie Jessie, opened the meeting at 4 PM. Chairman Cornelius Booker took over the meeting for the "City of Houston" updates.

Commissioners Present: Tony Jones, Louis Maher, Benigno Aceves, Cornelius Booker, Tina Williams, Monte Osburn, Eddie Jessie, Shelley Townsend, Frankie Sims, Lesa Jackson Lazard, Karen Cunningham, and Elizabeth (Beth) Delledera.

Commissioners Absent: Maria Palacios, Brandon Bowie, Charles LaDay, and Roland Bienvenu.

Ex Officio Present: Jay Stiteley, Division Manager, MOPD

Ex Officio Present: Matt Russell, ADA COORDINATOR

Legal Present: Tiffany Evans

### Minutes

The HCOD minutes for June 9, 2016, were approved without alterations.

### Public Comments

Ms. Jessica Bimmermann (248-535-1891, [jessica@guidedogsoftexas.org](mailto:jessica@guidedogsoftexas.org)) of "Guides Dogs of Texas" introduced herself. She is doing in-home training for guide dog users.

Ms. Candi Sexton-Ruiz continued Ms. Angela Trahan (HCOD meeting May 12, 2016) request for HCOD help in developing a business plan to create a Houston center for the deaf. She said that the deaf center will be called "The Greater Houston Action Center of the Deaf". She sent a business plan to Commissioner Delledera for review.

Mr. Jose Avila (832-292-0942) said that he was urging the MTA to provide better bus access to specific areas such as the Lighthouse of Houston, and the Houston Center for Independent Center. Mr. Avila has attended MTA board meetings and spoken to MTA staff about this.

Commissioner Jones suggested that Mr. Avila speak with Mr. Andy Skabowski on these issues.

### Presentation

Ms. Dorene Philpot is a private practice attorney based in Galveston, Texas. She devotes her practice entirely to representing special needs children and their parents under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act. She is the author of "Do-It-Yourself Special Education Due Process: An Educational Guide" which is available at [www.learningenabledpublications.com](http://www.learningenabledpublications.com).

Ms. Philpot gave an overview of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act. She had e-mailed her talk and biography to the HCOD. Her contact information is:

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### Committee Updates

Policy Evaluation and Improvement – Louis Maher, Chair

No updates.

Emergency Preparedness – Debra Nowinski, Chair

No updates.

Employment – Benigno Aceves, Chair

Commissioner Aceves said that the committee will seek to increase the number of disabled individuals working in the City of Houston's summer jobs program by having an employment workshop, for disabled young people, on January 21, or January 28, 2017, at the MMSC. The committee will publish a list of job opportunities in this program. The committee will work with the Marketing committee to promote this program. The committee will also have a workshop for parents to get their disabled children into this program. There might be a separate workshop for deaf young people.

There will be a breakfast meeting between business leaders and disability advocates on August 1, 2016 to discuss the value of hiring the disabled. Commissioner Aceves will send Mr. Stiteley a flyer on this. Mr. Stiteley will send it to the HCOD.

Metro/Transportation/Parking/Recreation – Tina Williams, Chair

No updates.

Housing & Tenancy Issues Involving Individuals with Disabilities – Lesa Jackson Lazard, Chair

No updates.

Mayor's Disability Advocate of the Year Award (MDAYA) – Tony Jones, Chair

Commissioner Jones said that Yellow Cab would pay for the MDAYA award plaques.

Marketing – Frankie Sims, Chair

Commissioner Sims said that the committee is waiting for the city to publish the city's Facebook posting guidelines.

This committee will next meet when the new commissioners are sworn in.

Commissioner Sims urged HCOD members to volunteer to man the HCOD information booth for the Houston Abilities Expo (<http://www.abilities.com/houston/directions.html>). The Expo date is from August 5 through August 7, 2016. It will occur at the NRG Center, Hall E. The event times are: Fri. 11am-5pm, Sat. 11am-5pm, and Sun 11am-4pm. Commissioner Booker had e-mailed the HCOD a sign-up sheet for this event.

HARP (Houston Application Review Panel) – Eddie Jessie, Chair

The new commissioners will be sworn into the HCOD on August 11, 2016, at the next HCOD meeting.

Police Response to Persons with Disabilities – Brandon Bowie, Chair

No updates.

K-12 Disability Related Issues in Public Schools – Karen Cunningham, Chair

Commissioner Cunningham said she has a breakout session, at the Abilities Expo, on Saturday August 6, at 2:30 to 3:30 PM, on how to successfully advocate for disabled children.

#### City of Houston Updates

Metropolitan MSC Update – Chuck French

Mr. French said that the MMSC has two major projects, one on building a larger canopy out front, and a second on flood repairs. There is not estimate concerning when the canopy will be finished. The flood repairs are almost complete.

The MMSC is hosting the Theater Under the Stars River camp where disabled children can perform plays and give musical performances. The camps are a week long, and the final recitals occur on Fridays, at 11 AM, in the gym. The recitals are open to the public.

Mr. French then outlined the remaining MMSC activities.

ADA Update - Matt Russell, COH ADA Coordinator

Mr. Russell said that Houston's "Reasonable Accommodation for Disabled Employees" has been sent to the Department of Administration and Regulatory Affairs (ARA) for review.

MOPD Update – Jay Stiteley, Division Manager

Mr. Stiteley said that this was "national Disability Voter Registration Week". There was a disabled voter registration event on the morning of July 14, 2016.

#### Commissioners' Comments

Commissioner Booker asked people to send him their Ability Expo volunteer times if they could serve. He said it would cost \$12 to park all day for the event.

Commissioner Cunningham said that you can purchase a three-day parking pass for \$20.

Commissioner Lazard said that she would be at an art event during the Ability Expo.

Commissioner Cunningham has persuaded the Expo organizers to give the HCOD an exhibit space for free.

Commissioner Jones said that Yellow Cab had to pay \$12,000 to have a booth at the Expo.

Commissioner Jones asked about the status of the Disability Awareness Month Kick Off, and the status of the new commissioners. Mr. Stiteley said that the Disability Awareness Month Kick Off has been cancelled, and the new commissioners will join the HCOD at the August HCOD meeting.

Commissioner Aceves outlined the White Cane Safety Day event:  
Event Date, Time, and Location

Friday, October 14, 2016, between 7 AM and 2 PM at City Hall, Hermann Square 900 Smith Street, Houston, TX, 77002.

The march will begin at 9:30 AM. The program will begin at 10 AM and end at 11:30 AM. Exhibitor visits will be between 11:30AM and noon. Lunch will be provided, and will be at 12 PM. The event will officially end at 1:30 PM.

The event supporting organizations are:

Newfield Exploration Company, The Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), The Houston Commission On Disabilities (HCOD), The Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD), The Texas Rehabilitation Association (TRA), and Workforce Solutions.

A flyer is under development.

Commissioner Delledera said that she had received the business plan for the "Greater Houston Action Center of the Deaf". She asked if there was a document showing the Houston Mayor's priorities. Mr. Stiteley said there was such a document. He would look for it.

Commissioner Townsend said that there was a workshop on transitioning disabled children to adulthood. This workshop is from 6:00 pm—8:00 pm, at the Shriners Hospital, 6977 Main Street, 5th & 6th Floor Foyer. There is Free and accessible parking. See ([www.coe.uh.edu/pep](http://www.coe.uh.edu/pep)) for details of the Parent Education Project. She will e-mail Commissioner Booker an event flyer.

Mr. Stiteley thanked Commissioner Cunningham for arranging for the HCOD to have a booth, for free, at the Abilities Expo.

Mr. Stiteley said that he was leaving the MOPD due to illness. His last day in the office will be July 29, 2016.

Many other speakers thanked Mr. Stiteley for his work with the disabled, and express deep sadness for of his illness.

#### Adjournment

The HCOD meeting adjourned at 6:04 PM.

Minutes submitted by Louis Maher ([ljmaher@swbell.net](mailto:ljmaher@swbell.net), 713-444-7838).

Please submit any corrections to Louis Maher.