

HCOD Meeting Minutes for 2-9-17

The Houston Commission on Disabilities met on Thursday, at the Houston February 9, 2017, at Metropolitan Multi Service Center (MMSC), 1475 West Gray, Houston, Texas 77019

Commissioner Petty, opened the meeting at 4:00pm, and did the Roll Call.

Commissioner Roland Bienvenu motion to approve Meeting Minutes for, January 12, 2017, Commissioner toby Cole, 2nd the motion to approve from last Month.

Commissioners Present: Emmanuel Arizona Eziashi, Benigno Aceves, Tina Williams, Lesa Jackson(Lazard), Toby Cole, Richard Petty, Eddie R. Jessie, Karen Cunningham, Asha Dhuka, Shelly A. Townsend, Roland Bienvenu, Frankie Sims, Toby A. Cole, Elizabeth Delladera

Commissioners Absent: Tony Jones, Maria Palacios, Michael McCulloch,

MOPD Present: Angel Ponce

Ex Officio: Matt Russell, ADA COORDINATOR, not present

Legal Present: Tiffany Evans

Guest Ex Officio: Louis Maher, clarified that the Motion to eliminate some of the HCOD Committees was not approved, so all Committees still stand. Also, clarified that the HCOD Chair can approve and appoint Commissioners to be the Chair over a Committee.

Public Comments:

Ellen Goudeau: I feel strange because there is no mic, but I am here to register a complaint to the commission. The agenda for this meeting and committee meetings, for the HCOD meeting must be posted downtown prior to meeting, 72 hours before, I believe it is in the ordinance. I am a former commissioner, and we had done it the Friday before the week of the Thursday of the meeting.

To allow for the citizens to have plenty of time to see what's on the agenda. I have been downtown and I'm downtown quite often in City Hall, and I have not seen the agenda posted. And I thought I would come here and register my dissatisfaction with that before I took it to city council.

Commissioner Petty: That's an excellent concern and if that's not being done, then we're concerned about that concern.

We can talk internally and I'm trusting that is correct. Then, we will make sure that is done. Please accept our apologies and our concern. Thank you for coming.

Audience Member: Sami Rahman, I want to inform the Commission on a project I have. I am someone who self-identifies as being disabled and I also have a child who is 8 years old who has cerebral palsy and autism so I'm awake a lot. One of the problems that the disability community is how fractured it is.

There are so many concerns and we see ourselves by our diagnosis and all that fun stuff, in my own personal experience, what I've realized is the people that I've learned from the most don't have anything in common with me or my disabilities. This is the project and it actually started with a conversation that I had with Angel about eight or nine months ago, It is a website for the entire disability community. It will focus in on disability events in the City of Houston. For children, adults, seniors, educational and professionals and respite care.

I am seeking financial sponsorship. I will under-write this whole endeavor, and I am seeking corporate, non-profit, and institutional sponsors. I'm already currently talking to Easter Seals, the ARC, TCH, and potentially the City of Houston. I'm also looking for feedback from the community. I'm looking for individual involvement. And an introduction to others who may be interested in doing this.

The value proposition for the end user is very clear. The value for the disability services is also very clear. If you talk to nonprofits, they get funding based on how many people they can engage. Nonprofits spend a lot of time and they spend a lot of energy trying to engage the public. Some of them do it very well, a lot of them have great intentions and don't do it very well at all. To centralize that kind of effort can impact the broader community and draw us all together. I have business cards. I'm not looking for public feedback now, but after this event, if you are interested, I absolutely want to understand how we can connect. Thank you.

Commissioner Petty, thank you for being here.

Audience Member: Jose Carlos, I wear an assistive listening device and just like mister here talking about the mobile technology, I'm also in the mobile technology trying to connect people and the reason I'm here today is to talk about -- I don't know much about the governments, but I listen that the commission of disability is vacant, and I think it's for a year vacant and I think it's a missed opportunity, and so we are working together to nominate a very, very bright person for the position. Her name is Rikki Martinez who apologizes for not being here today. What we do is about grown circles and communicate with people, and listen to what the concern and there is lots of concern right now in the communities. I am here to try to get your support for Rikki Martinez to the position, please. Thank you.

Commissioner Petty, well first, if I understood, you were saying that there is a vacancy. As of now, unless I am mistaken, there is not a vacancy. There will be as commissioners' terms end, and there is a committee that will seek nominations and I know that that committee would very much like to see a nomination or application from the person that you brought forward. So, that would be very much welcome.

Commissioner Bienvenu, are you speaking of Jay Stiteley's position.

Angel Pounce, that position is no longer open. The Department of Neighborhoods has already chosen a person for that position. I don't know the name of that person at this moment.

Commissioner Petty, thank you both for clarifying that. I misunderstood.

Audience Member: Ricky Harris (Resource Specialist), I'm a deaf resource specialist, so when I was on the HCOD at the MOPD, of course, on the website, when I was on this website, I didn't see any resources available for the deaf and hard of hearing services. It will be nice if you updated and see some of that information available on your website. So, that our community can find resources from your website, and you please update that on your page. That's my only feedback, and some website has different thing. Thank you

MOPD – Angel Ponce, what would you like to see, I would like to talk to you after the meeting.

Commissioner Emmanuel, he will be bringing up the updates, to improve things to the community.

Previous Presentation Update:

Officer James Sobota, I have updates to the questions from the deaf and blind community, we are learning so much. More training now for traffic situations, if someone need directions. He has gone to many groups, workshops, any suggestions please give the feedback. 10 questions: formal complaint – come to the meetings. Do you have policy – they have a general outline, they can get an interpreter. What is the process – good judgement. Training, several courses through the year. They only train with the deaf and blindness community. Can they provide a training with the deaf and blind community, they bring people in all the time? Strategies is kept, there is a screen. They can do presentation any disability things for the deaf and blind, or disability. Are video machines, they will provide an interpreter to get there.

Commissioner Petty, we will look forward to you coming back when we have time.

Officer James Saboto is available to be here for any questions on a later date, when it has been posted on the Agenda for that Month.

Strategic Planning for HCOD: Toby Cole, reached out to a couple of Commissioner to join the Committee. Commissioners that would like to join the Committee; MOPD – Angel Pounce, Commissioner Eziashi, Commissioner Delladera, Commissioner Jackson (Lazard)

Presentation:

Commissioner Petty, we have a presentation from Alex Heim who is the chief of staff of the administrative and regulatory affairs department of the City of Houston. We asked Mr. Heim to come before the commission to give us an update on taxi and transportation network company access. Commissioner Cole could frame some of this because he's been involved in some of the work here in Houston.

Commissioner Cole, A couple of years ago, it seems like Uber has been here a long time now but it really hasn't. When Uber came, and wanted to operate in our city, the vehicle for hire ordinance had to be changed to allow them to operate. The disability community came out in at the open meetings at city council and wanted to be heard.

The city was very proactive in making sure that when the ordinance was rewritten, that not only was Uber going to have to be accessible, but we were going to tighten up or the city is going to tighten up services by cab companies, services by limo companies, and every aspect of vehicles for hire. The ADA has been around for 25 years, but transportation is one thing that has lagged for a very long time. One of the ways that this was going to be accomplished is the city put together a task force.

Alex Heim, Chief of Staff, Chapter 46, Paddy Cab, ARA is responsible forcing Chapter 46 of the city's cod of ordinances which regulates. The Task Force Process was created. Approved in 2015, its foundation is the goal of hold all vehicles accountable for providing accessible service while giving companies flexibility on how they provide services. They percentage based method, they need to convert some of their vehicles to wheel chair, percent. It requires to do a shop shoot, to know they are doing what they are required to do, they are in the reviewing process, for 2017. Enforcement dates listed on presentation. They had to revoked 22 permits, 92 sent to hearing. They will provide this information to the Commission when they get it. Anyone can file a complaint is needed. They have received 5 complaints, and things are being done to solve these problems. They are regulating the vehicles for hirer.

Commissioner Bienvenu, I have a question about the cases that you were referring to. I believe you said there were five. Can you share with us the nature of those cases or complaints? If you know. Alex Heim, I'll defer to Richard. I think Richard may have filed them.

Commissioner Petty, I am not sure about the others and whether I have filed others. I'm not sure about how many of those -- either 2015 would be minor, but I could tell you the two cases that I filed were for denial of service because I use a dog guide and the drivers did not want to carry the dog in their vehicle. The ordinance applies to all drivers and all vehicles. As does the Americans with Disabilities Act, so that's just as an example. The one that had the 30-day suspension is a gentleman who said that he had an allergy and he didn't want to carry the dog. And he stopped and spoke to me about it and it's also much more common for drivers simply to see the dog and drive by.

Which is insidious and hard for those of us with visual impairments. I'm sure with visual impairments to be certain of the nature of it, but that's also another example of the kind of cases that exist.

Commissioner Cole, how is chapter 46 different.

Alex Heim, by passing this ordinance, this allows us to give a solution.

Matt Russell: The bills that you talk about in the legislature that would override the local city ordinances, at that point it devolve to what state agency? Does it only regulate cabs and other ride sharing services or how does that work?

MR. HEIM: So that depends a little bit on which bill would end up passing if any. Some bills, for example, and I believe there are about four or five that we've seen. I know one bill is complete deregulation of all vehicles for hire.

I'm not sure if state even takes that on. Typically, what they've been trying to do is put it to the -- I think it's the Department of Transportation or public safety sometimes. Again, it depends on what the legislature writes into the bill.

And some of them also are just deregulating certain segments of the vehicle for hire industry. So, taxis and limos for example may remain at the municipal level, but TNC's like Uber and Lyft may be at the state level. They been trying to put it to the bill, it depends on what bill is approved.

Audience Member Ricky, vehicle for hirer, I do remember I was looking for some resource about the TLOR, or Uber

Mr. Heim, Uber is vehicle for hirer, Uber or TLOR website.

Commissioner Eziashi, do you have any information on any disable person not getting service.

Commissioner Cole: If you pull out your phone right now you don't have the wheelchair app on your Uber.

Commissioner Williams: I already know that they're not going to take me for a ride. But I looked for it and they refer you to yellow cab or Metro-Lift.

Commissioner Cole: And that's why you need to report that. But if you type in your phone access, you'll pull up that says WAV access.

Commissioner Williams: I had a lawsuit against Uber in more than one city and I won. I know that I'm not going to be able to ride.

Commissioner Cole: How long ago was that?

Commissioner Williams: That was two years.

Commissioner Cole: The ordinance now has changed that and so it's different now. It's better than it was two years.

Commissioner Aceves: I was about to say that I think people may not know about the option of calling and complaining because I guarantee without even thinking about it the problems would be a lot more than five if they did know about it.

I know as far as the disabled community -- the blind community uses Uber a lot. Just for the simple fact that there is no option of cash transaction. It's all through the app. The fact that Uber will say something about the disabled community when the disabled community would hate to see Uber leave the City of Houston, particularly the blind community.

Commissioner Petty, Uber cancel the meeting, and Charles was asked to be here by phone to speak about Access living lawsuit.

Committee Updates:

COH Policy Evaluation & Improvement – No Updates

Marketing, Frankie Sims – Chair, we do have Facebook up and going. I have been trying to post everything you guys have sent to me. If I've missed anything, let me know. We have posted several of the upcoming events, Benigno upcoming employment flyer. You can meet with me after the meeting if you have any more events.

Emergency Preparedness –

Commissioner Williams, I attended the meeting myself and Shelley Townsend for this past week for emergency preparedness, has been very interactive with emergency preparedness since she joined the Committee. I would like to move that she be chair of the emergency preparedness because we don't have a chair. Commissioner Townsend was appointed the new Chair for Emergency Preparedness. 1st Motion by Commissioner Williams, and 2nd by Commissioner Karen Cunningham.

Commissioner Townsend, Chair - The Emergency Preparedness workshop changed the name to Extreme Weather Readiness Expo, and it is a free family preparedness event. The event is schedule on June 3, 2017. Saturday. In hall A, and as we get closer, we'll need to discuss -- we're going to have a table there and so we need to discuss with Commissioners -- I can send a list out for those who want to volunteer. It's from 9 until 3, so they can be at the tables to talk about the Houston Commission on Disabilities. The MOPD will have a table also.

HARP – Eddie Jesse, Chair – No Update

Employment – Benigno Aceves, Chair, the Employment Committee been working hard on the workshop. It is schedule for Saturday, March 4th, 2017. It's going to be held at HCC, 5601 West Loop south. I want to thank everyone who has been actively working on this event. Definitely big queue bow to Commissioner Lesa and Commissioner Asha. The workshop is for parents and youth 16 to 21. We're excited about that. We're going to have different workshops going on. Angel has been monitoring the registration. As of yesterday, I think we have about 20 signed up. A few have requested accommodations, and one of the business relations coordinator for

Workforce Solutions, also having an event in June. The City of Houston has been promoting the event on social media, on their news board, and website.

Disability-Related Issues in Public Education - Karen Cunningham, Chair - I'm listing events that are coming up and we would love for commissioners to come to these events. They are always open. Saturday February 11th, it's called Mikey's Place a special needs resource fair being held at memorial United Methodist Church in Houston from 9 to is.

Saturday, February 18th, from 10 to noon at the downs syndrome association of Houston central, 7115 Tidwell. There will be a presentation on successful advocacy. You can register at dsah.org.

Sunday, February 19th, at noon, Second Baptist Church, Katy campus, a presentation on successful advocacy. You can register with the church.

Wednesday, February 22nd, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., First Baptist Church of Houston will have a presentation on successful advocacy and a special needs ministry called Through the Roof.

Saturday, February 25th, 2017, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., at the Briarwoods school on (inaudible) drive, Houston, Texas, will be the Attention Deficit Association Southwest Region Houston event. We'll have an educator track, a mental health professional track, a parent track, I'll be presenting there that day. There will be -- there are still some stipends left for people that want to register. The registration closes February 26th. You can register at add-sr.org.

Saturday, April 8th from 9 to 1 p.m., there will be an autism fair hosted by Pearland ISD at Manville High School. You can register through either one of the school districts.

Thursday, April 20th, will be the friends and family with children with disabilities in the Galveston area. Presentation on advocacy from 6:30 to 7:30 at Dickinson High School.

Saturday, April 20th from 10 to noon will be a presentation advocacy with the Downs Syndrome Association of the Woodlands and you can register add dsah.org.

And I just wanted to give another update on our friends from the U.S. Department of Education coming and helping the State of Texas with their special education needs. They were here in December 12th. I listened to parents and after that meeting and after meeting with TEA, Texas Education Agency, they have then further decided that they will be visiting districts site the week of February 27th, but they did not disclose which districts they will be visiting with. The process of the cap of 8.5 percent of kids in Public Education get Special Education services is still being investigated by federal government.

Parks & Accessibility - Tina Williams, Chair, had our meeting with Houston airport, they becoming a part of the committee, they want to do a presentation on booking tickets, how to go through catching a plane, both airlines. Also, letting them know you have some form of disability, because there is an agent who will be assigned to you from beginning, until you leave the airport and that works both ways. But they are going to train us how to do it

Housing & Tenancy Issues - Lesa Jackson (Lazard), Chair, after attending a meeting, January 17,2017, at the Houston Center for Independent Living(HCI). The meeting was a Forum on Fair and Accessible Housing for People with Disabilities with the Greater Houston Fair Housing Center. I informed them about the HCOD, and who we are. Several attendees wanted to joined the (HCOD) Housing and Tenancy Issues Committee. We are going to have our first meeting at the Metropolitan Multi Service Center (MMSC). It is schedule for February 20, 2017, at 10:00 a.m. I am welcoming any of Commissioners who would like to attend the meeting.

We also have a Presentation scheduled for April 13, 2017, with Daniel Bustimante, Executive Director, with the Greater Houston Fair Housing Center, that will be held at our HCOD meeting.

Metro/Transportation/Parking - Tina Williams, Chair, METRO, we had an issue that was brought before us regarding an E-mail that I ended up receiving of a client who was at sheltering arms, and the driver treated that person bad. The gentleman walked on a Walker and he walked slow. The METRO Lift driver had an issue with that client. She threatened to leave him, and she was just basically rude. Well, the person who sent the E-mail got the driver hid her badge so that they couldn't get the name, but they did get the vehicle number. They did get the license plate off the METRO Lift van, and they did have the time of day, and they did have the location where the client was picked up. I did receive a letter from Michael Andrade. They did remove that driver and sent them back through for some sensitivity training and they were also suspending Ford a few days.

Police Response to Persons with Disability - Emmanuel Arizona Eziashi, Chair, he sent an invitation to the chief, he will continue to follow up. I didn't get a response. We did have Officer Sobota give us a short presentation. He came today to give an update on several of our questions mention at the last meeting presentation.

I'm still trying to get a hold of the constable's office, so hard to get through to them. They don't reply to any E-mails. I'll keep on following up and see if I can invite one of them to come up to our meetings.

MDAYA - Tony Jones, Chair – No Updates

Metropolitan MSC Update - Chuck French, Monday activities added, people spending time, we have more activities throughout the week.

Parks and Recreation Department adaptive sports and recreation division manages the facility. However, the general services department maintains the facility, and handle maintenance at this facility.

Front canopy project we're about 99.9 percent finished. They are going to install some lights for us under the tree and we're also going to have power so we can put some nice holiday lights up and other lights on it during the holidays. So, that will be fun.

Lobby TV's we finally have our lobby TV's. You may have seen them when you came in or not. Wired, hooked up, they are displaying information, schedules, partner information, program information, pictures, videos of stuff we've done.

2017 capital improvement project meeting -- we host one every year. We'll be hosting ours February 20th, 7 p.m. It is open to the public. I will see if this will be an open meeting to invite the Commissioners.

We have hosted our slam jam wheelchair basketball tournament this past weekend. Partner with the city of Pearland at the beautiful Natatorium and Recreation Center. We had six teams come in from across Texas. Over 150 athletes came in and played a single day, long day tournament in wheelchair basketball. This is a developmental tournament for newer players, division 3. It is important that we try to offer these kind of developmental type tournaments so that everybody gets a chance to play and we try to give the newer players more playing time. Next weekend we'll take wheelchair basketball to three sleigh port and Albuquerque the following weekend and we have sports going on every weekend this month.

ADA Update - Matt Russell, COH ADA Coordinator, update on legal seeing one line email we had 6, 1 in gravamens, things are ongoing. 16 athletes to come in to play, and they open the torments. February huge sport events, hoping to turn everything around. This weekend will be wheel chair ball.

Legal Representative: Tiffany, when we find out a member cannot attend a regular member, a call or email to the alternative, who is going to serve and how long. Secretary should record this in the meeting.

We must stay within the guidelines for holding meetings, on when we will need legal at the meeting. If there is more than six Commissioners in attendance at a meeting, then it is a quorum guideline.

MOPD Update -, Angel, provide services, 10 sidewalks, 6 tenant housing, home repair 5, modifications 4, 11 apartment locations, 9 utility assist, 7 medical equipment, 2 transport, legal 2, 6 volunteer legal, 8 employment, 3 blind service, 4 tax assist, adapt sports 3, 1 free tattoo, about 99 people. Neighborhood center and MOPD Partnering to do taxes for the disable community, and knighting gale. Every sat. 3/25 starts, call, or email the office.

February Reel abilities art celebration, 2/16, 2/19-2/23. 4 short films.

Free Legal advice here at 2/16 after on 3/19, 3/29, on our websites.

We went through the hurricane preparedness program. And I'm not sure if I mentioned last time I was here about the free legal advice clinics that we partner with the South Texas College of Law and the Houston Volunteer Lawyers Program.

The next meeting is here for South Texas College of Law, February 16th. And after that, will be March 16th, and we encourage citizens that need legal advice on family law, probate, estate planning, guardianship, to please give us a call so that we can let the representative of South Texas College of Law and the representative with the Houston Volunteer Lawyers know that you're coming.

And for the Houston Volunteer Lawyers, next meeting will be March 29th between 2 and 5 p.m. here at the metropolitan multiservice service center. That's all I have for you today.

Commissioners Comments:

Benignos, there was a night for the Reel Abilities for HCOD. Angel will check and see what we can do to go together.

Richard Petty, representative of Metro is coming about metro issues, 2/15 workshop on Main St., it is an opportunity to hear about the Board plans. It can be found on the metro website. It will be a time for the commission to give feedback.

A person has been hired for the MOPD replacement, and they are ready to announce this person, upcoming.

The mayor's office has not told me who the person is. But I can tell you that they are excited about the person and very eager to introduce him or her and they also have signaled to me that this office of MOPD will have a higher profile in this administration than in the past.

Adjourn at 6:00 p.m. Motion by Commissioner Williams, and Seconded by Commissioner Townsend

Commissioner Lesa Jackson (Lazard), Secretary