

The Houston Commission on Disabilities Meeting Minutes for June, 8, 2017

The Houston Commission on Disabilities met on Thursday, June 8, 2017, at the Houston Metropolitan Multi-Service Center (MMSC), 1475 West Gray, Houston, Texas 77019.

Chairman Richard Petty had opening remarks at 4:00pm, he announced that the CART captioning service transcriber wasn't present on today. Therefore, he polled the participants to see if anyone that was present would need that service in order for the meeting to resume. No one present objected to moving forward with the meeting without the CART service. Commissioner Petty emphasized to the Commission the importance of "attendance". He further cited the ordinance that supports his concern and he wanted everyone to be aware.

Vice Chairman, Eddie Jessie conducted roll call:

Commissioner's Present: Toby Cole, Shelley Townsend, Roland Bienvenu, Eddie Jessie, Frankie Sims, Michael McCulloch, Richard Petty, Maria Palacios, Asha Dhuka and Emmanuel Eziashi;

Commissioner's Absent: Karen Cunningham, Benigno Aceves, Leza Jackson-Lazard and Tina Williams;

Ex Officio Present: Maria Town, Division Manager, MOPD

Ex Officio **Absent:** Matt Russell, ADA COORDINATOR

Legal Present: Tiffany Evans

Minutes:

The HCOD minutes for May 11, 2017, were approved without alterations.

Commissioner Roland Bienvenu motioned to approve the minute meetings for May 11, 2017 and Commissioner Toby Cole, 2nd the motion; the minutes were approved without alterations;

Public Comments:

1. Dominic McCoch- Mr. McCoch shared with the Commission that in the past 12 months there's been 2 profound deaths in the City, Mark Cole and Commissioner Tony Jones, both very influential. He stated that it would be great to name a bus in their memory, because it shows the community that a common man can be active and make a difference in the community. He suggested attending the next Metro board meeting would be a start.
2. Mary Hanks- Ms. Hanks announced that the, "Disability Houston News" is now being broadcast on KPFT 90.1 FM. It currently airs at 9:00 am on the 1st and 3rd Fridays of the month. The next upcoming shows are scheduled for June 16, July 7, and July 21. She welcomed everyone to listen. She further provided the following email address if anyone had comments or suggestions; disabilityhoustonnews@kpft.org.

Presentation:

Ms. Kathryn Bruning, ARA's Assistant Director of Regulatory Permitting, Wheelchair Accessible Ordinance on Vehicles for Hire; Director Town introduced the guest speaker: Law HP100 was passed May, 2017 and signed. Ms. Bruning stated that TNC is no longer being regulated at the local level, but the on the State level. There are 3 other Cities participating in the pilot program, but Houston is not one of them. However, the airport can do limited regulations. She provided an update on a few companies that were required to turn in reports, 300 companies were called and asked to be in compliance, only 20 companies responded. Two taxi cab permits were revoked, but no further information on TNC.

Questions:

Commissioner Petty posed several questions to Commissioner Cole for feedback and update on some of the concerns mentioned by our speaker, since this was his area of concentration. One question pertained to the compliance of Uber with the City's requirements and Commissioner Cole replied, "yes, they are in compliance". The guest speaker answered the question about the access options, in which there were 2. She stated that majority choose number 2. The Chairperson asked if the potential passengers had any recourse if there are complaints made, the guest speaker stated "no". Ms. Bruning stated that there are no State-level procedures in place as of yet. She further mentioned that city regulation of limousines and taxis; if there are any problems with these services, the company's will be brought in for a hearing and it will be dealt with.

MOPD Director's Report-Maria Town: Ms. Town gave an update on the legislature passing a budget and they are waiting to see how it goes. The Mayor spoke at a luncheon and shared with the audience about his mother and brother both had disabilities. She further mentioned that MOPD is proud of the job fair in which they partnered with The Greater Houston Business Leadership Network, The Texas Workforce Solutions, The Texas Department of Health and Human Services, The Department of Veterans Affairs and the U. S. Department of Labor. There were 300 participants. She thanked everyone for attending the "Weather Preparedness Event" and commended Commissioner Townsend for an outstanding job chairing her committee. She also shared with the Commission that Mayor Turner signed the reasonable accommodation policy for the City. Director Town further announced that MOPD will have a table at the "Abilities Expo".

Amanda: MOPD updates; there were 7 calls that came in, 2 were about sports, 2 were about apartment assistance, 3 were about employment;

Committee Updates:

Marketing- (Frankie Sims, Chair)- things are pretty quiet for the Summer, but if anyone have any information to share, get them to her;

Emergency Preparedness – (Shelley Townsend, Chair)- thanked everyone for their participation at the "Weather Preparedness Convention"; 11 people were provided information which was really helpful;

Employment – (Benigno Aceves, Chair)- N/A

HARP- (Eddie Jessie, Chair)- there are 2 complete applications on individuals interested in serving on the Commission; we have one individual interested and stated that he submitted his application, but he is out of State at the time; we are still seeking talented and wonderful personalities who are interested on serving on the Commission, please share with others;

Disability-Related Issues in Public Education- (Karen Cunningham, Chair)- N/A

Parks & Accessibility- (Tina Williams, Chair)- N/A

Metro/Transportation/Parking- (Tina Williams, Chair)- N/A

Housing & Tenancy Issues- (Lesa Jackson Lazard, Chair)- N/A

Police Response to Persons with Disabilities- (Emmanuel Eziashi, Chair)- he met with some Officers and shared with them that, when they are dealing with the deaf or hard of hearing issues and how to handle the person in certain situations; he mentioned that 2 days ago he met with an Officer trained in that area, but he did not know that they were supposed to be an interpreter when they approached someone deaf;

Strategic Planning and Development- (Toby Cole, Chair)- we are looking for more members to join us, if interested please email him and let him know that you would like to serve;

City of Houston Updates:

Metropolitan MSC Update – Hannah Walker- she gave us an update on the wheelchair tournament in Dallas and in DC. a basketball presentation; Ms. Town shared with the Commission that there were some episodes on TLC featuring my “600 lb Life”;

ADA Update – N/A

Legal Ms. Evans- No comments;

Commissioners’ Comments: Commissioner Petty noted that Houston is a progressive city, the Mayor is making advances on many fronts, including disability issues, as evidenced by the appointment of an extremely qualified person to the MOPD. The disability community faces important challenges with Medicaid cuts and efforts to roll back protections of the Americans with Disabilities Act. HCOD is well positioned and capable to continue advancement of people with disabilities.

Adjournment:

The motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Cole and 2nd by Commissioner Bienvenu;

The HCOD meeting adjourned at 5:05 PM.

Minutes submitted by Eddie R. Jessie (eddie,jessie@theharriscenter.org) 713-446-8772;

Please submit any corrections to Eddie R. Jessie.