

## **The Houston Commission on Disabilities Meeting Minutes for June 13, 2019**

The Houston Commission on Disabilities met on Thursday, June 13, 2019, at the Houston Metropolitan Multi-Service Center (MMSC), 1475 West Gray, Houston, Texas 77019.

Chair Petty called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm with there being a quorum present. Chair Petty gave opening remarks by welcoming everyone to the meeting. Chair Petty announced that cake would be served after the meeting. The cakes states "Houston Loves Maria Town". Next Chair Petty asked Commissioner Potts to proceed with roll call.

### **Roll call of the Commissioners:**

Commissioners Present: Maria Palacios, George Powers, Eileen Edmonds, Richard Petty, Mark Potts, Shelley Townsend, Tina Williams, Benigno Aceves Jr, Emmanuel Arizona Eziashi, Sara Freeman Smith

Commissioners Absent: Khafilat Adesokan, Asha Dhuka, Toby Cole, Michael McCulloch,

MOPD Staff Present: Angel Ponce-Treviz, Amanda Boyd, Annie Bacon, Alex Chou, Jess Faerman

Ex-Officio Present: Maria Town, Director, MOPD

Ex-Officio Present: Marshall Watson, Administrator Coordinator – ADA, City of Houston, Human Resources Department, Employee/Labor Relations Division)

Legal Present: **Tiffany Evans**

Chair Petty asked for a motion for the April minutes approval. Motion by Commissioner Freeman-Smith and seconded by Commissioner Edmonds. The HCOD minutes for May 9, 2019 were approved.

### **Public Comments**

Chair Petty explained the process of public comment. Angel Ponce introduced the following speakers.

Jessica Ferguson holds yoga classes to the blind and deaf community as well as others with disability. The class meets Monday from 7:00-8:00 and Thursdays from 1:00-2:00 at the MSC Activity room 1.

Miguel Garcia, from Little Hope Wheelchair Association. Inquired about the nomination and election process for the commission. Commissioner Smith explained that applications are in review.

Sue Perlow shared that her daughter and son in law perished in a car accident and her grandchildren were injured. Two that were injured are wheelchair bound and participate in the TIRR adaptive sports program. Sue would like to raise funds and awareness for the program.

Angel Ponce stated that there were no more public comments.

Chair Petty thanked everyone for their public comments.

## **Speakers for today**

Harris County Clerk Diana Trautman presented information about the Harris County Clerk's Office. Duties include recording real property licenses, marriage licenses and administering state and county elections. For the elections, the office provides training to judges, creates ballots, maintains voting equipment, handles mail-in ballots and records the votes.

Since taking office, a countywide polling place program has been put in place which enables voters to vote anywhere within the county not by a specific voting location. Also, via harrisvotes.com, red, yellow, green status advertises the congestion of each voting site, hours have been expanded and a lawsuit with the DOJ was settled.

As a result of the lawsuit, polling locations are being resurveyed for compliance with standards for voting place compliance. Policies have been updated to address ADA concerns. Curbside voting has been introduced and a system of stakeholder outreach and engagement has started.

Questions were asked by commissioners and answered and Commissioners made comments.

Questions were asked by the public and answered.

Chair Petty thanked everyone for their public comments.

The Special Task Force on Intersection and Sidewalk Accessibility headed by Richard Petty has been created. The task force receives support from Metro and the City of Houston. The task force has met six times and plans to present a set of recommendations and solutions to the mayor.

## **MOPD Director's Report**

- Director Town thanked the committee for the cake.
- Emmitt Hagan, a May graduate and Eagle Scout, is the MOPD Summer Intern and shared challenges with employment.
- The City of Houston Human Resources department has mandated that jobs that do not require a driver's license should not require a driver's license.
- In April:
  - The City of Houston began building a resiliency strategy. MOPD leads the equity and inclusion group.
  - MOPD presented at the state emergency task force
  - The City of Houston has launched a safer street initiative where any citizen can report sidewalk issues via 311
- In May:
  - MOPD toured and provided a disability audit at Space Center Houston.
  - MOPD participated in a MOPD meeting in New York City along with other US city's MOPDs.
  - MOPD provided comments and technical assistance for the Houston Galveston transit plan and bicycle committee
  - MOPD began planning for Real Abilities
- In June:
  - Angel Ponce received his associates degree
  - Had a press conference to announce corrections at deadly intersection.
  - Mayor Turner announced 50 for 50 in which businesses to adopt parks with accessibility in mind.

- MOPD will host a service dog symposium on June 14.

### **MOPD Staff Report**

MOPD Staff Alex Chou reported the Leaping in to Employment event summary. 500 students attended.

Jess Fareman shared that MOPD visited NASA. Recommendations include scripts from tours and shows and languages to apps.

Angle Ponce announced literature referrals from a health and resource fair. 76 attendees and 36 vendors. He also reported the number of contacts from April and May which were five times the number of request compared to prior years.

Director Town announced her new job starts July 15 as AAPD President and CEO. Her last MOPD meeting will be July 11.

Chair Petty thanked Director Town and MOPD Staff for their reports.

### **Committee Updates**

#### **Community and Transit Access (Tina Williams, Chair)**

Understanding Service Animal Symposium scheduled for 6/14/2019 from 9:00-12:00 at the West Gray Multi Service Center in the gym.

#### **Disability Unity and Pride Celebration (Maria Palacios, Chair)**

“People like Us” is this year’s theme. Program is 100% disability led and represented. This year will include an emphasis on the deaf community. Volunteers are needed.

#### **Education (Eileen Edmonds, Chair)**

No update.

#### **Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Recovery (Shelley Townsend, Chair)**

Thanked volunteers for attending Extreme Weather Ready Expo. Listed and thanked speakers

#### **Employment and Transition to Employment (Benigno Aceves, Chair)**

Thanked partners for participating in Leaping In to Employment event. Region 4 and TWC joined the event. Plans underway for 2020 event.

#### **Housing and Tenancy (No Chair)**

No Report

#### **Law Enforcement and First Responder Response to the Disability Community (Emmanuel Arizona Eziashi, Chair)**

Participated in PIP meeting about how to support people and get them out of trouble in certain situations. Specifically, how does one who is deaf communicate with the police – is it a card? HPD to get a new sign language contract in July

**Public Awareness (Mark Potts, Chair)**

Thanked Jess Fareman with assistance in keeping Facebook active.

**Strategic Planning and Commission Membership (Toby Cole, Chair and Sara Freeman-Smith, Co-Chair)**

Three names have been submitted to the city council for approval to fill vacancies. Incomplete applications will be reviewed and the team will contact each applicant.

**Metropolitan Multiservice Center – (Chuck French/Hannah Walker)**

Wheelchair basketball and rugby summer leagues are starting on Wednesday and Thursday nights.

**ADA Update - (Marshall Watson Administrative Coordinator – ADA, City of Houston, Human Resources Department, Employee/Labor Relations Division)**

No Update

**Commissioners' Comments**

Commissioner Edmonds asked that MOPD perform an audit on the theatre district through the Accessibility Consortium.

The HCOD meeting adjourned at 5:58 pm. Motion to adjourn: Commissioner Potts. Seconded: Commissioner Williams.

Minutes submitted by Mark Potts ([potts60@hotmail.com](mailto:potts60@hotmail.com), (713) 444-1222).

Please submit any corrections to Mark Potts.