**The Houston Commission on Disabilities Meeting Minutes for April 13th, 2023**

The Houston Commission on Disabilities met on Thursday, April 13, 2023. Social distancing guidance in response to the COVID-19 pandemic prompted the Commission to meet online through Zoom.

Chair Silcox called the meeting to order at 4:05 pm with a quorum present and welcomed attendees to the meeting. Chair Silcox asked Kayla Melcho to proceed with the roll call.

**Roll Call of the Commissioners:**

Position 1: Michael Cottingham Present

Position 2: Ricky Don Harris Present

Position 3: Ann M. Bacon Absent

Position 4: Daquan Minor Absent

Position 5: Sashikala Nisankarao Present

Position 6: Monique Mason Present

Position 7: AJ Morton Present

Position 8: Vacant Unfilled

Position 9: Vacant Unfilled

Position 10: Meridith Silcox – Chair Present

Position 11: Lydia Nunez Landry Present

Position 12: Michaela Cueto Present

Position 13: Osvaldo Capmany Present

Position 14: Alexis Smith Absent

Ex-Officio: Angel Ponce Present

Ex-Officio: Marshall Watson Present

Legal: Rebekah Wendt Absent

**MOPD Staff:**

Stephanie Haechten, Kayla Melcho, Sissel Carlsen, John Serrano, Amanda Boyd, Alex Chau

**West Gray Multiservice Center Staff:**

Hannah Walker, Nolan Griffin

**Approval of Minutes:**

No minutes to be approved – a quorum was not present for the March 2023 meeting.

**Public Comments:**

None at this time.

**Presentation:**

Earth Day 2023 – Billy Rudolph, Chief of Staff - Administration and Regulatory Affairs, City of Houston.

* Speaker series begins on Monday, April 17th through Tuesday April 18th
* Speakers will be presenting every hour from 8:00 am – 5:00 pm
* About 22 different panelist sessions to choose from.
  + **Topics include**: transportation, water conservation, electric vehicles, microgrids, low carbon initiatives, solar energy, green buildings, recycling, forestry, environmental justice, and disproportionality of climate changes impact on people with disabilities.
* Festival begins at 10:00 am on Wednesday, April 19th
* Festival will have special guests including Mayor Turner, music, a fashion show, and an urban garden. Food trucks and giveaways will be taking place.
* Visit earthdayhtx.org for more information.

**Presentation:**

Houston’s Pragmatic Studies Program - Justo Garcia, Admissions Counselor, Kolbe School of Innovation and Professional Services, University of Saint Thomas-Houston

* Kolbe School of Innovation and Professional Services has been around since 2019 and the University of St. Thomas has been around since 1947
* Chairman Dr. Torres and her team launched the Pragmatic Studies Program in 2021:
* Pragmatic Studies is a two year program that offers in person courses to students with disabilities.
* Pragmatic Studies course offers wrap-around services that are integrated into the program using their universal design learning module.
  + Based on three principles: Engagement, Representation, and Material
* Offers dedicated academic success coach, program support, time management, learning therapists, and access to resources.
* UST offers five online degree programs:
  + server security, network technology, general business, drug and alcohol counseling and general studies
* Housing is available on campus or individuals can commute.
* As the program expands, merit-based scholarships will become available.
* Applicants must have graduated from high school and complete a free application. No GPA requirements for online courses.

**MOPD Director’s Report:**

MOPD Report to the HCOD (Angel Ponce, Director, Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities)

* Addressed need for a Secretary to be appointed for future HCOD meetings.
* MOPD was present yesterday for the City Hall appointment of the new commissioners by the Mayor and City Hall.
* Welcomed new commissioners.
* Review of committee’s available to join
* Welcomed and introduced MOPD’s new Senior Community Outreach Coordinator, Stephanie Haechten
* Welcomed and introduced MOPD’s new Community Liaison, Sissel Carlsen
* Acknowledged promotion of Kayla Melcho from Community Liaison to Community Engagement Coordinator

**Metropolitan Multiservice Center Report:**

MMSC Report to the HCOD – Hannah Walker, Facilities Manager, Houston Parks and Recreation Department

* Basketball team just returned from Wichita
* Gearing up for summer league
* Partnered with Move United for the NCAA – had the opportunity to provide a wheelchair basketball demo and get the crowd and athletes into chairs.
* Happy birthday to Nolan
* Nolan starting up the kid’s track and field program

**Committee Updates:**

None at this time.

**ADA Update:**

None at this time.

Chair Silcox motions to adjourn meeting. Commissioner Ricky Harris seconds it. Meeting closes at 5:31 PM.

Meeting Minutes recorded by Kayla Melcho, [kayla.melcho@houstontx.gov](mailto:kayla.melcho@houstontx.gov)

Please send any corrections to Kayla Melcho.