

Houston Commission on Disabilities

February 12th, 2026, 4:00 – 6:00 PM

The Houston Commission on Disabilities meets on the 2nd Thursday of every month at Houston TranStar (6922 Katy Road). The meeting is streamed on the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities Facebook page.

Chair Silcox went over housekeeping items.
Norma Medrano proceeded with the roll call.

Roll Call of the Commissioners:

Position 1: Michael Cottingham	Absent
Position 2: Caitlin Conner	Present
Position 3: Ann M. Bacon	Absent
Position 4: Katie Crouch	Present
Position 5: Sashikala Nisankarao	Present
Position 6: Monique Mason	Present
Position 7: Adam Farris	Present
Position 8: Amie Jean	Present
Position 9: Mary Sias	Absent
Position 10: Meridith Silcox – Chair	Present
Position 11: Lydia Nunez Landry	Present
Position 12: Melisa Rosario-Diaz	Present
Position 14: Adele Henry	Present
Ex-Officio: Angel Ponce	Present
ADA Coordinator: Desiree Johnson	Present

Chair Silcox called the meeting to order at 4:47 PM with a quorum present and welcomed attendees to the meeting.

MOPD Staff: Angel Ponce, Amanda Boyd, Norma Medrano, Kimberly Blanchard

Metropolitan Multiservice Center Staff: Chuck French

Announcements

Review and Approval of October Meeting Minutes

Motion: Chair Silcox

First: Commissioner Amie

Second: Commissioner Rosario-Diaz

Public Comments

None

Expert Speakers- The University of Texas at Austin- Texas Technology Access Program

Angela Standridge, M.A, CCC-SLP, ATP, Director,
Shannon Paige, M.A, CCC-SLP, Education Project Manager, The
University of Texas at Austin. – Texas Technology Access Program

- Viva La Vida AT 2026
 - October 28-29 2026
 - University of Texas, J.J Pickle Research Campus
 - Annual Statewide AT Conference
- Services
 - Demonstrations of Assistive Technology
 - Re-Use of Assistive Technology
 - Financial Loan Resources
 - Device Loans
 - Resources for Assistive Technology

MOPD Report to the HCOD

Angel Ponce (Director, MOPD) Quarterly Status Update Nov 2025- Jan 2026)

- **Outreach & Community Engagement**
- Aldine Transition Expo (Nov 8)
- OPD 101 at Dobie High School (Nov 19): Ms. Medrano presented city support to the next generation of Houstonians
- **Resource Fairs & Holiday Support**
- Community Turkey Drive (Nov 20): Partnered with local corporations to provide holiday meals to families in need

- Coffee and Conversations (Dec 3): Hosted 100+ residents and 16 vendors at the Metropolitan Multi Service Center
- United Way Interagency Information and Referral Network Showcase– Participated in monthly sessions (Nov/Dec/Jan), with the January session focusing on "The Clarity Process" for respectful community dialogue.
- **Strategic Partnerships**
- IDD-PAC Holiday Reception (Dec 9): Celebrated partnerships at the Harris Center to advance progress for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- **II. ADA Transition Plan: Phase 2** -OPD is shifting strategic goals toward sustainability and digital compliance for 2026.
- **Sustainable funding:** Establishing models for long-term ADA infrastructure projects
- **Digital Accessibility:** Aligning city materials with **WCAG 2.1 Level AAA** standards ahead of federal deadlines
- **Targeted Clinics:** Launching clinics for Benefits, Supplies, and Legal Aid.
- **III. Internal Growth & Capacity Building**
- Now Hiring: Actively recruiting a **Sr. Communications Specialist** to lead our multi-media accessibility guides and digital compliance.
- Staff Training: In alignment with our ADA Plan we are getting ready to integrate disability-focused modules into the City's Training Management System (TMS) for all Departments.
- IV. ReelAbilities Film & Arts Festival Schedule
- **Tuesday, February 17, 2026**
- **Reel Film: Mental Health Night (Featuring "Blind AF")**
- **Time:** 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM
- **Description:** The featured film "Blind AF" explores personal narratives related to vision loss and mental health, followed by a discussion intended to remove stigma and foster understanding.
- **Tuesday, February 24, 2026**
- **Reel Film: Closing Night (Southpaw)**
- **Time:** 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM
- **Description:** *Southpaw* chronicles tell the extraordinary journey of Jim Abbott, a Major League Baseball pitcher born without a right hand. From his childhood in Flint, Michigan to his unforgettable no-hitter at Yankee Stadium, the film explores Abbott's resilience, ingenuity, and impact on generations of disabled athletes.
- **Thursday, February 26, 2026**
- **Reel Music**
- **Time:** 7:30 PM – 9:00 PM (Doors open at 7:00 PM)
- **Location:** The Becker Theatre – Emery/Weiner School
- **Description:** The festival's grand finale. This high-energy concert showcases "Reel Musicians"—local and national performers living with disabilities. The lineup typically spans

various genres including jazz, rock, and blues, featuring a house band and guest artists to celebrate the power of music to unite communities.

- **V. How to Apply for HCOD Membership**
- **Register:** Create a profile on the Mayor's Office of Boards and Commissions website.
www.houstontx.gov/boards/
- **In the Search Box** – Commission on Disabilities
- Click Apply
- Submit when completed
- **Resume and Reference Letter/s Submission:** Email the package to mopdmail@houstontx.gov with the subject: *HCOD Membership and – [Your Name]*.
- **Vetting:** Candidates undergo a background check prior to Mayoral appointment.
- **End of OPD Report**

- **VI. Houston Champion of Inclusion (COIN) Awards**
- The COIN Awards honor those who proactively dismantle physical, digital, and social barriers.
- **Today's Honoree: Dr. ReShanna Reed.**
- Recognized: Dr. Reed today for her excellence in creating inclusive spaces for youth and families. Her leadership in equity and belonging serves as an inspiration to the entire Houston community.

MMSC Report to the HCOD

Chuck French (Recreation Specialist, MMSC)

- Pool at MMSC
 - Staffing issues, struggling to get positions hired, new city rule has prevented MMSC from hiring seasonal lifeguards
- No answers for when construction at MMSC will be getting funded
- Wedding at MMSC tomorrow night
- MMSC served as a warming center for the past two weeks. Assisted well over 400 people

ADA Update

- Desiree Johnson introduction- new Citywide Accommodation and Grievance Coordinator

Committee Updates

- Chair Silcox is looking forward to having positions filled and is working on application and interview process

- Orientation for December will be put off due to commissioners rolling off

What commissioners have been working on:

- Commissioner Landry brought RevUp Texas magnets, voting plans and brochures- information on voting assistance, curbside, election protection hotline, if you need a ride to the polls, Disability Rights Texas
- Commissioner Farris met with Commissioner Rodney Ellis in early February on various topics. Will share pictures and blog post.
- Commissioner Mason- first Townhall meeting this past Tuesday at MMSC

Chair Silcox motions to adjourn meeting.

Meeting closes at 5:28 PM.

Meeting Minutes recorded by Amanda Boyd; Amanda.Boyd@houstontx.gov. Please email any corrections.