

The Houston Commission on Disabilities Meeting Minutes for April 8, 2021

The Houston Commission on Disabilities met on Thursday, April 8, 2021. Social distancing guidance in response to the COVID-19 pandemic prompted the Commission to meet online through Zoom.

Chair Aguillard called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm with a quorum present and welcomed attendees to the meeting. Next, Chair Aguillard asked Commissioner Edmonds to proceed with the roll call.

Roll call of the Commissioners:

Present Position 1: Ismael Garcia Cantu
Present Position 2: Ricky Don Harris
Present Position 3: Ann M. Bacon
Present Position 4: Daquan Minor
Present Position 5: Raul A. Gallegos
Present Position 6: Richard Petty - Chair Emeritus
Present Position 7: Tina Williams
Present Position 8: Kimberly Aguillard - Chair
Present Position 9: Sara Freeman Smith
Present Position 10: Meridith Silcox
Present Position 11: Eileen Edmonds
Present Position 12: Mark Potts
Unfilled Alternate 1: Vacant
Unfilled Alternate 2: Vacant
Unfilled Alternate 3: Vacant
Unfilled Alternate 4: Vacant
Present Ex-Officio: Gabriel Cazares, Director, MOPD
Present Human Resources: Marshall Watson, Administrator Coordinator – ADA, City of Houston, Human Resources Department, Civil Service & EEO Division
Present Legal: Rebekah Wendt

MOPD Staff:

Present Nick Arcos
Present Amanda Boyd
Present Alex Chau
Present Luis Moreno
Present Angel Ponce-Trevizo

Multi Service Center Staff:

Absent Charles French
Present Hannah Walker

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Sara Freeman Smith motioned for the approval of the March 11, 2021 HCOD minutes; Commissioner Annie Bacon seconded the motion. The March 11 HCOD minutes were approved by HCOD.

Public Comments

Angel Ponce directed the members of the public wishing to make a public comment to indicate so by inputting it into the chat box. Each guest has a maximum of three minutes to speak.

- Sandra Imery – shared information about Houston Financial Empowerment’s and Region bank’s financial literacy month class about credit and financial counseling for individuals with disabilities on April 14th from 10 AM – 12 PM.
- Thelma Scott – no show
- Dr. Angela Trahan – shared information about the Deaf Emergency Resource Team
- Joy Cabador – has an internship with the Metropolitan Multiservice Center (MMSC) through University of Houston. She is conducting a research study about the impact closure of the MMSC has had on participants’ health and quality of life.

Emergency Readiness and Response Plans (Nickea Bradley, Deputy Director, Office of Emergency Management, George Buenik, Director, Mayor’s Office of Public Safety and Homeland Security)

The team reviewed the recent challenges related to extreme cold weather, power outages, low water pressure, and broken pipes had on the City of Houston. They reviewed the response as it relates to State of Texas Emergency Registry (STEAR), Home and Community Support Services Agencies (HCSSAs), future actions. They also shared resource links.

Several commissioners asked questions.

MOPD Report to the HCOD (Gabe Cazares, Director, Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities, Angel Ponce, Senior Community Engagement Liaison, Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities)

- Angel spoke about projects with the Houston Public Library, HUB Houston, and Museum of Fine Arts of Houston. The upcoming Leaping Into Employment Event is a collaboration between MOPD, Region 4, and Texas Workforce Commission.
- MOPD will be moving their offices to the Houston City Administration building @ 611 Walker. They will retain an office @ the MMSC.
- MOPD recently was awarded a \$120,000 grant for transportation.
- Director Cazares asked commissioners to share updated bios and headshots. They will be updated on the website within the month.
- MOPD is monitoring proposed legislation restricting voting access for individuals with disabilities in Texas with an eye to deliverables and measurable action steps.

MMSC Report to the HCOD (Hannah Walker, Recreation Facility Manager, Houston Parks & Recreation Department)

No re-opening date is set yet. Tabata Tuesday will be onsite in the circle drive of the MMSC. The beep baseball field has been re-leveled and surfaced. The spring vegetable garden has been planted. Park staff are developing a natural habitat area near the back of the grounds. MMSC staff is also excited to announce that they’ve been hosting wheelchair basketball outside since its been set up near the back-parking lot area.

Committee Updates

Community Access (Tina Williams, Chair)

This committee now includes Transit and Housing. Commissioner Williams was aware of citizens still without running water. Houston Public Works, Baker Ripley, and other non-profits can assist. MOPD will share resource information with Commissioner Williams.

Education (Mark Potts, Vacant Position, Co-Chairs)

No update at this time. MOPD is working to secure a co-chair to helm this committee with Mark Potts.

Planning, Membership, & Community Engagement (Annie Bacon, Eileen Edmonds, Co-Chairs)

Commissioner Bacon shared that the annual Disability Unity and Pride event is slated for July 26. It will be an online event including panel discussions centered around the theme of resilience.

Emergency Preparedness, Response, & First Responder Training (Ricky Harris, Chair)

No update. The committee is currently reviewing the disaster recovery process.

Employment and Transition to Employment (Meridith Silcox, Chair)

Commissioner Silcox shared they have identified a co-chair for the committee and were reviewing its scope of work.

Immigrants & Refugees with Disabilities (Ismael Cantu Garcia, Chair)

Strategy & Administration (Richard Petty, Sara Freeman-Smith, Meridith Silcox, Co-Chairs)

No update.

ADA Update - (Marshall Watson Administrative Coordinator – ADA, City of Houston, Human Resources Department, Civil Service & EEO Division)

No update.

Commissioners' Comments

Commissioner Petty discussed the possibility of HCOD drafting a resolution on lack of energy preparedness for the future. Chair Aguillard thanked everyone for their support throughout the committee re-structuring process.

The HCOD meeting adjourned at 5:49 pm.

Motion to adjourn: Commissioner Richard Petty

Seconded: Commissioner Meridith Silcox

Minutes submitted by Eileen Edmonds (eileen@tuts.com, 281.797.3796).

Please submit any corrections to Eileen Edmonds.