

## The Houston Commission on Disabilities Meeting Minutes for January 14, 2016

The Houston Commission on Disabilities met on Thursday, January 14, 2016, at the Houston Metropolitan Multi-Service Center (MMSC), 1475 West Gray, Houston, Texas 77019.

Chairman, Cornelius Booker, opened the meeting at 4:02 PM.

Commissioners Present: Tony Jones, Louis Maher, Maria Palacios, Brandon Bowie, Cornelius Booker, Charles LaDay, Monte Osburn, Eddie Jessie, Shelley Townsend, Frankie Sims, Lesa Jackson Lazard, Karen Cunningham, and Elizabeth (Beth) Delledera.

Commissioners Absent: Benigno Aceves, Tina Williams, and Roland Bienvenu.

Ex Officio Absent: Jay Stiteley, Division Manager, MOPD

Ex Officio Present: Candace Lamb

Ex Officio Absent: Matt Russell, ADA COORDINATOR

Legal Present: Tiffany Evans

### Announcements

#### Meeting for New Commissioners

For new HCOD commissioners, there will be a meeting on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and on Robert's Rules of Order. The meeting will take place on Saturday, February 13, 2016, at 10 AM, at the MMSC. Commissioner Booker will send out a reminder e-mail on this meeting.

#### HCOD Sponsorship of three ReelAbilities Film Festival Movies

The HCOD was asked to sponsor three short ReelAbilities Film Festival movies occurring on Tuesday, February 16, 2016, from 7 PM to 9 PM. There will be a discussion after the movies.

Sponsoring movies means that the HCOD would volunteer for that evening, and would invite other individuals to these movies. The movies will be at the Edwards Greenway Plaza theater.

The movie theater address is:

Edwards Theater Grand Palace Stadium 24,  
3839 Wesleyan St,  
Houston, TX 77027

The movies are: Coaching Colburn, Hear This!, and One Year Later, Followed by a post screening discussion featuring One Year Later's Film Star & Director: Rosa Post and Nick Chambers

Advanced registration is required to reserve your seat.

Tickets are available online at ([www.ReelAbilitiesHouston.org](http://www.ReelAbilitiesHouston.org)) or call 832.786.0361.

Commissioner Maher will send out more information on this event.

### Minutes

The HCOD minutes for December 10, 2015, were approved without alterations.

### Public Comments

Mrs. Peggy Garrett had two comments.

1. The Hobby airport security guards would not allow MetroLift vehicles to pick-up and drop-off their passengers at the assigned MetroLift stop. Mrs. Garrett said that disabled passengers had to cross several lanes of traffic to get where they needed to go. She asked the HCOD to talk to the Metro board to get this issue resolved.
2. When MetroLift passengers want to go to areas outside of MetroLift's normal service area, they must pay with two MetroLift tickets. Passengers who have purchased a monthly or yearly MetroLift pass are still charged two tickets for this extra service. Mrs. Garrett asks that the MetroLift passes should count as part of the extended service fare.

Mrs. Garrett asked the HCOD to write a letter to the Metro board on these issues for the January 27, 2016 Metro board meeting.

#### Presentation

Officer James Sobota (james.sobota@houstonpolice.org), Houston Police Department (HPD) spoke on the topic of "Deaf Culture Training".

Officer Sobota joined the HPD in 1985. His current assignment is to be the coordinator of the HPD Citywide Positive Interaction Program (PIP). The PIP is a community relations program, that brings the citizens of Houston together at each police station, to educate and inform communities of police service and activities.

Officer Sobota has provided equal opportunity with the "PIP" program to the deaf community and has researched and introduced the Video Remote Interpreting "VRI" system to the Houston Police Department.

On the second Tuesday of odd-numbered months, from 7 PM to 8 PM, at the police union hall (1602 State Street Houston, TX 77007) there is a citywide PIP meeting concerning the general state of the HPD.

Commissioner Jones asked if disabled individuals could be used to train the police on how the police should interact with the disabled community. Officer Sobota said this was being considered.

Commissioner Jones will e-mail Officer Sobota to arrange a meeting to discuss this issue.

Commissioner Jones asked if the effort to train officers how to interact with the disabled community would continue under the new mayor's administration. Officer Sobota said that he thought it would be continued.

Commissioner Lazard asked if the PIP gives presentations to apartment communities. Officer Sobota said yes.

Commissioner Booker asked if HPD trained new officers to work with mentally ill individuals. Officer Sobota said yes.

#### Committee Updates

The new commissioners have not yet received their HCOD handbooks.

Commissioner Booker will send the HCOD the HCOD committee descriptions.

Most of the committees will need to be re-staffed and have new chair persons appointed.

#### Policy Evaluation and Improvement – Louis Maher, Chair

Commissioner Maher said that since the new commissioners have been appointed, that the HCOD committee structure should be revisited. He said that there were not enough HCOD people to staff all the HCOD committees. He suggested that the number of committees be reduced. The criterion for keeping an HCOD committee would be the importance of the committee focus, and the interest of the HCOD individuals who would staff the committee.

Originally commissioner Maher proposed having a conference call, with the entire HCOD, to decide on which committees should be kept. However, since this would violate the open meetings requirement, this will not work. Commissioner Maher proposes to send a note to the HCOD to see who would like to be on the Policy Evaluation and Improvement committee. The first four commissioners who show interest in joining the committee will be on the committee. The Policy Evaluation and Improvement committee's recommendations will be presented to the February HCOD meeting. Commissioner Maher will ask that no formal presentation be scheduled for this meeting so that the HCOD committee structure can be thoroughly discussed.

#### Emergency Preparedness – Monte Osburn, Chair

Commissioner Osburn said he will be attending the January 26 Houston Emergency Preparedness meeting. He continued to express his frustration on the amount of disability-related emergency preparedness documents released by the city of Houston.

Commissioner Palacios expressed an interest in joining this committee.

#### Employment – Benigno Aceve, Chair

Commissioner Palacios is interested in joining this committee.

Commissioner Palacios will contact Commissioner Jones to get the details of the Gulf Coast Workforce board meetings which will give her updates on the local employment situation.

#### Parks & Accessibility –

Commissioner Palacios is interested in joining this committee.

#### Metro/Transportation/Parking – Tina Williams, Chair

Commissioner Jones wants to join this committee. He is not sure if this would be a conflict for him since he works for Yellow Cab.

#### Housing & Tenancy Issues Involving Individuals with Disabilities – Lesa Jackson Lazard, Chair

Commissioner Lazard asked to chair this committee.

#### Mayor's Disability Advocate of the Year Award (MDAYA) – Tony Jones, Chair

Commissioner Jones asked to chair this committee.

#### Marketing – Frankie Sims, Chair

The following commissioners wanted to join this committee: Charles LaDay, Roland Bienvenu, Shelley Townsend, Frankie Sims, Lesa Lazard, and Elizabeth Delledera.

#### HARP (Houston Application Review Panel) – Eddie Jessie, Chair

Commissioner Jessie has agreed to chair this committee.

Commissioner Jones wants to join this committee.

#### Police Response to Persons with Disabilities – Charles LaDay, Chair

Commissioner LaDay is preparing a survey to measure police interaction with the disabled. He is asking that some of his co-workers at the Harris Center for Mental Health and IDD, both take the survey, and administer it to their clients.

#### K-12 Disability Related Issues in Public Schools – Karen Cunningham, Chair

Commissioner Cunningham is preparing a letter to Texas Governor, Greg Abbott, protesting the fact that Texas is 50th in special education funding in the U.S. She will send this letter to Mr. Stiteley for legal review. She wants the HCOD to officially send this letter to the governor.

Commissioner Cunningham then announced several special education events.

#### Metropolitan MSC Update – Chuck French

Mr. French summarized the MMSC repair schedule. It is hoped that all construction will be completed by July 1, 2016.

#### ADA Update - Matt Russell, COH ADA Coordinator

No updates.

#### MOPD Update – Jay Stiteley, Division Manager

Ms. Candace Lamb reported on the following items.

1. Mr. Stiteley had completed half of the Hobby airport accessible signage review.
2. There were three people who participated in the recent South Texas College of Law clinic.
3. The MOPD worked with the Houston Fire Department on their procedures for communicating with deaf citizens.
4. The MOPD and other organizations are sponsoring a workshop on disability to productivity. The HCOD will be e-mailed flyers for this event.

#### Commissioners' Comments

Commissioner Townsend asked what would be the role of the HCOD members for the February 16, 2016 ReelAbilities movie event. Commissioner Booker said that he would ask for clarification on the HCOD role. Commissioner Booker will circulate a sign-up sheet to see who is coming to the February 16 movie event.

Commissioner LaDay wanted to remind the new HCOD commissioners that they were allowed one unexcused absence per year.

Commissioner LaDay asked if the new commissioners can get HCOD shirts. Commissioner Booker will check with the shirt provider on this issue. Commissioner Booker will make a sign-up sheet for those interested in shirts.

Commissioner Lazard will be at the HCOD on February 5, 2016, from 8 AM to 9:30 AM to promote a heart awareness event. She will send out a flyer for this event.

Commissioner Jones said that the delivery of the new MetroLift vehicles, discussed in the December 10 HCOD meeting, would be delayed until approximately April 1, 2016. He also said that the contracts that would allow all taxi back up drivers to become MetroLift Subsidy Program (MSP) drivers has not been completed. He thought that the contract should also be completed by April 1, 2016.

The HCOD meeting adjourned at 5:25 PM.

Minutes submitted by Louis Maher (ljmaher@swbell.net, 713-444-7838).

Please submit any corrections to Louis Maher.

