

The Houston Commission on Disabilities Meeting Minutes for May 12, 2016

The Houston Commission on Disabilities met on Thursday, May 12, 2016, at the Houston Metropolitan Multi-Service Center (MMSC), 1475 West Gray, Houston, Texas 77019.

Chairman, Cornelius Booker, opened the meeting at 4:01 PM.

Commissioners Present: Tony Jones, Louis Maher, Maria Palacios, Benigno Aceves, Cornelius Booker, Tina Williams, Roland Bienvenu, Eddie Jessie, Shelley Townsend, and Frankie Sims.

Commissioners Absent: Brandon Bowie, Charles LaDay, Monte Osburn, Lesa Jackson Lazard, Karen Cunningham, and Elizabeth (Beth) Delledera.

Ex Officio Present: Jay Stiteley, Division Manager, MOPD

Ex Officio Present: Matt Russell, ADA COORDINATOR

Legal Present: Tiffany Evans

Minutes

The HCOD minutes for April 14, 2016, were approved without alterations.

Public Comments

Ms. Angela Trahan introduced several deaf individuals. She asked for HCOD help in developing a business plan to create a Houston center for the deaf.

Commissioner Booker suggested that Ms. Trahan could work with Mr. Stiteley on this.

Commissioner Williams suggested that Ms. Trahan could contact Commissioner Williams for this center.

Commissioner Aceves suggested that it would be useful for Ms. Trahan to develop a list of needs that the center would satisfy.

Commissioner Jones asked if they were part of a 501(c)3 organization. Ms. Trahan said that the Dallas deaf center was a 501(c)3 group. Currently there is not an official Houston organization.

Ms. Trahan will send Mr. Stiteley information on Ms. Trahan's center related meetings.

Commissioner Jones suggested that their meetings should be on a bus line or MetroLift route.

Ms. Natasha Turner is the Communication Relations manager for the center (<http://thecenterhouston.org/>). The Center promotes the pursuit of choice, growth, and personal independence for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. She spoke about her organization's programs.

Commissioner Jones asked Ms. Turner to give the HCOD a formal presentation.

Ms. Tina Chandler gave the following announcement: **On Sunday, May 15, 2016, the metropolitan Multi-Service Center, 1475 West Gray, Houston, TX. 77019, will host the Abilities and**

Beyond Fit Expo. It will be from noon until 6:00 pm. Come see presentations, and participate and learn how to become fit. Information and demonstrations will be shared by an Olympic level competitor.

Ms. Rosario Vazquez spoke on her bad experiences with the airlines concerning her son who is a wheelchair user. She asked for help with these issues.

Commissioner Booker suggested that Ms. Vazquez Contact Commissioner Williams who chairs the "Metro/Transportation/Parking/Recreation" committee.

Presentation

Mr. Wes Carr, Texas Lion Camp Executive Board Member, gave an Overview of the Texas Lions Camp. The Texas Lions Camp is a residential camping facility for children with physical disabilities, type 1 diabetes and cancer. The Camp is located on over 500 acres in the Texas hill country, and is designed to introduce the "Can Do" philosophy to children dealing with special medical conditions.

The camp has a 2.5-million-dollar annual budget. The camp annually hosts 1500 children for a week long camp experience. The maximum age of the children is 16 years old.

The camp counselors come from around the world. The counselors must be at least 18 years of age. Around 40% of the camp children come back as counselors. Many of the counselors have disabilities. The counselors must be able to work from 9 to 12 weeks a year to make best use of the length of time it takes to train a counselor.

The camp went from two-week sessions to one-week sessions to be able to serve more children.

Mr. Carr asked for help in recruiting students for the camp.

Commissioner Jones discussed his experiences at the camp.

Committee Updates

Policy Evaluation and Improvement – Louis Maher, Chair

No updates.

Emergency Preparedness – Debra Nowinski, Chair

Ms. Nowinski gave the following announcement:

2016 NOAA Hurricane Awareness Tour comes to Scholes Airport
(<http://www.galvestonairport.com/#!blank-3/daob>).

Come by Scholes Airport on May 17th, 2016 from 2:00 - 5:00 pm!

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the National Weather Service, FEMA and many others will be visiting Galveston Island to raise awareness of hurricane threats and the importance of planning ahead of the hurricane season.

Come see dynamic aircraft, meet with experts and learn more about hurricane preparedness. The NOAA G4 and US Air Force C-130 hurricane hunter aircraft will be on display for the public to tour from 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm. This great event is free of charge! There will be booths, exhibits and lots of great displays.

Ms. Nowinski discussed the May 21, 2016 Hurricane workshop to be held in Hall A-3 at the GRB convention center from 9 AM to 3 PM.

Ms. Nowinski has all the handouts for the HCOD emergency part of the workshop.

Ms. Nowinski said it was important for the disabled to attend the workshop. She said that many individuals do not have an emergency plan, and this makes them helpless when a crisis occurs. She said the HCOD members should urge their various disabled communities to prepare for emergencies because it is up to the individual to have a practical emergency plan, and be able to execute it.

Ms. Nowinski also said it was important for the city to see that the disabled are interested in their own survival during emergencies so that sufficient resources can be allocated to help the disabled.

There will be a CPR demonstration for the deaf at 11:30 AM at the Red Cross booth.

Commissioners were asked to wear their HCOD shirts.

Employment – Benigno Aceves, Chair

Commissioner Aceves said that the committee would work on diversity awareness training for employers.

Commissioner Aceves said that the committee will seek to increase the number of disabled individuals working in the City of Houston's summer jobs program by having an employment workshop, for disabled young people, on January 28, 2017, at the MMSC. The committee will publish a list of job opportunities in this program. The committee will work with the Marketing committee to promote this program. The committee may also have a workshop for parents to get their disabled children into this program.

Commissioner Jones asked Commissioner Aceves to go to the workforce board meetings. Commissioner Jones will give Commissioner Aceves the board meetings' meetings dates, times, and locations.

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

Commissioner Williams said that she had met with Todd Curry, a representative of the City of Houston Airport Authority, on airline accessibility issues.

Commissioner Williams will schedule a committee meeting on May 24, 2016. She will send the meeting information to the HCOD.

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

No updates.

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

No updates.

Marketing – Frankie Sims, Chair

No updates.

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

Commissioner Jessie says that he has 11 complete HCOD membership applications.

There will be five vacancies on the HCOD in August 2016.

Police Response to Persons with Disabilities – Brandon Bowie, Chair

No updates.

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

No updates.

City of Houston Updates

Metropolitan MSC Update – Chuck French

MSCC facilities manager Hannah Walker summarized the MMSC repair schedule. It is hoped that all construction will be completed by July 1, 2016.

Ms. Walker summarized the summer activities for the MMSC.

ADA Update - Matt Russell, COH ADA Coordinator

No updates.

MOPD Update – Jay Stiteley, Division Manager

Mr. Stiteley said that Recently three people made use of the legal assistance provided by the South Texas College of Law (STCL).

Mr. Stiteley gave the following announcement.

2nd Annual Veterans and Individuals with Disabilities Hiring Event

The Greater Houston Business Leadership Network (GHBLN) in partnership with leading businesses and community organizations including, the Department of Labor- Office of Federal Contracts Compliance Programs, the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services, Workforce Solutions, and the Department of Veterans Affairs, cordially invites you to participate at the Second Annual Veterans and Individuals with Disabilities Hiring Event. Please take advantage of this opportunity to network and seek employment with employers from various industries including, healthcare, finance/banking, hotels/hospitality, service, engineering, oil and gas, manufacturing, production, logistics, technology, higher education, waste management, and retail, among others.

For Employers, Job Seekers and Community-Based Organizations

Tuesday, May 31, 2016

Job Fair 8:00 to 11:30 a.m.

The United Way Community Resource Center

50 Waugh Drive

Houston, TX 77007

- Job seekers must have completed a profile with Work in Texas at (www.WorkInTexas.com)
- Please dress professionally and have your resume available.

- 50+ Federal contractors and other businesses expected to attend.
- Registration: Required by May 20, 2016
- Event Registration link for Job Seekers: <https://goo.gl/v4eQJP>

Commissioners' Comments

Commissioner Palacios discussed the Women with Disabilities Empowerment Fair 2016 which was held on April 23rd at the MMSC.

Commissioner Bienvenu Thanked the people who attended today's HCOD meeting.

Commissioner Jones asked that when groups of people wish to speak, that they should clearly identify themselves before their comments. We had a large group of deaf individuals who used the same ASL translator. It was difficult to know who was actually speaking.

Commissioner Jones said that the new MetroLift-Yellow Cab contract came into force on April 1, 2016. He said that the number of MetroLift Subsidy Program (MSP) drivers was raised from around 234 to approximately 600. Commissioner Jones was involved in giving the training classes, on disabled passenger etiquette, to the new drivers. Commissioner Jones would appreciate hearing comments on how the new extended service is working.

Mr. Stiteley asked for a moment of silence due to the death of Commissioner Jones' mother.

The HCOD meeting adjourned at 5:54 PM.

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

Please submit any corrections to Louis Maher.