

HCOD Meeting Minutes for 7/13/2017

The Houston Commission on Disabilities met on Thursday, July 13, 2017, at the Houston Metropolitan Multi Service Center (MMSC), 1475 West Gray, Houston, Texas 77019

Roll Call was done by Eddie R. Jessie, Vice Chair, at 4:00pm.

Commissioners Present: Michael McCulloch, Eddie R. Jessie, Benigno Aceves, Roland Bienvenu, Shelly Townsend, Tina Williams, Frankie Sims, Richard Petty, Maria Palacios, Toby A. Cole, Emmanuel Arizona Eziashi, Asha Dhuka

Commissioners Absent: Karen Cunningham, Lesa Jackson (Lazard)

MOPD Present: Angel Ponce, Amanda Boyd

Ex Officio Present: Maria Town, Director, MOPD

Ex Officio: Matt Russell, ADA COORDINATOR

Legal Present: Tiffany Evans

Public Comments:

1. Bryan McKeckrin – Mr. McKeckrin shared with the commission he recently moved to Houston. He noticed there's a lot of sidewalk issues regarding crease -about two inches, places where sidewalks end and there's no curb cuts. He uses driveways go out in the streets which are busy. He was curious what kind of projects are going to be addressed and wants to see what we can do to improve it. He added some of the sidewalks also involves (indiscernible) stops which needs to be addressed.
2. Sandra- Ms. Sandra asked if it is standard to put in a wide sidewalk or is it if the developer feels like it, following with a couple of more questions such as the type of protection for all peoples that they don't put a blasted oleander six inches from the sidewalk and you can't cross because the sidewalk is covered and how to get on the priority list for the mayor's office with disability.
3. Sammy- Mr. Sammy questioned if his son who is in a wheelchair and has a problem that falls under the par program, will it take a year to fix. Lastly, he commented to Public Works to get out there with people with disabilities and get in a wheelchair and cross the street. He stated to get their engineers in wheelchairs and blindfolds and cross the street. "You can look at all the statistics and data and speck you want but until you live the experience, it will never key in." Sammy stated.

Presentation:

Ms. Carol Haddock, was deputy engineer of public construction for department of public works and engineering. She leads a team of 250 employees responsible for design and construction of more than \$600 million capital improvement program. She led the infrastructure planning branch which is responsible for long range planning efforts that lead to the development of infrastructure programs for

capital improvement plans. She is coauthor of the process manual for infrastructural programs which documents a transparent process in criteria to prioritize infrastructure needs throughout the city.

Ms. Haddock mentioned Public Works has four programs they work in to build sidewalks. The city funded programs - these are ones we have in the capital improvement program; these are funds that originate from whether it's property tax revenue or whether it's a portion of the metro funding they receive from metro. The program Public Works work with MOPD on is the "Par" pedestrian access rehabilitation projects. She explained they have many opportunities for improvement in that area and look forward to working with MOPD to improve all of those. It is to provide access to buses, schools, places of employment, shopping facilities, educational facilities, medical facilities, life. This is one that is top of the list with the funds that they have. The next two programs they have are the safe routes to school program which is a walking distance from a school which provides safe routes from neighborhoods into those schools themselves which they work with HISD on identifying those. The third program that they use their funding for is long thoroughfares which are major roadways, the ones that the bus routes are on. One of the programs is to specifically install sidewalks along the street that they don't exist or they're incomplete. They have recently added a program that has not been very successful called "privately funded" that said if you want to come and use the city as your contractor to replace your sidewalk, they will do that. Problem is, they're more expensive than your average concrete company because they're out doing this every day all day, where they're out doing very large projects, so to come do a little bitty small piece, it's just not very cost effective.

Questions:

Commissioner Emmanuel asked if it was possible director Maria to pro Posner to the mayor an idea for the council to discuss, provide and support that project? You know, which is very important for the city because many people with, you know, wheelchairs and other means need to have a way to get on the sidewalks safely. Ms. Haddock said they receive a request through the mayor's office for pedestrian accessibility, it is funded. It is funded within that year; it is implemented within that year. Commissioner Williams asked how are your priorities separated as to what sidewalks are done and what are not when the funding is available? Ms. Haddock responded regarding priority, the only real prioritization is if we receive the request through the mayor's office. Other than that, the requests are in the order in which they're received under the current program. Commissioner Cole explained that Ms. Haddock said there may be things on the par list however, they don't know because there's not a website, not a way to track that so they don't know. He continued then asked if something that can be done or is that something as a commission they can help motivate that. Ms. Haddock responded stating it would be a fantastic action item for them to add to the list to have this publicly friendly, have it viewable, that you can see the status so that you can know to report it to us. Commissioner Cole asked if it's a situation where the city doesn't want to spot fix? I think that would be cheaper than redoing an entire area and what the city look at when they fix sidewalks. Ms. Haddock explained they have historically not been good at spot fixing and they are actively pursuing spot fixes. Commissioner Cole added another question regarding the utility poles, if it is considered a center point issue where they put it in and if they get permission from the city to put it in. Ms. Haddock stated it's an unfortunate situation they're in and it's both of their responsibilities. Commissioner Cole then asked if Center Point puts a pole in the middle of

the sidewalk, who pays it. Ms. Haddock answered Center point will pay to fix it if it's in our right of way. Commissioner McCulloch asked what the priority is and if they're just waiting for whoever calls in, the squeaky wheel will get an audible wheel installed at an intersection or is there an effort to work with the blind community to determine. Ms. Haddock answered that on traffic signals normally they get scored by the traffic division. Mr. Russel explained the ADA has an organization, Transtar, clearinghouse for those organizations for roadways and asked if they can do that for sidewalks too? Ms. Haddock answered saying it would be an interesting recommendation from the commission.

MOPD Director's Report-Maria Town: Ms. Town announced the upcoming anniversary of the ADA. She shared that on July 26 1990, President George HW Bush, joined thousands of disability advocates sitting on the White House South Lawn and signed the Americans with Disabilities Act. To celebrate, she purchased a cake for the ADA'S 27th birthday and everyone in the room sang Happy Birthday. She further announced the MOPD, Chair Petty, and Commissioner Cole participated in the National Forum on Disability and Transportation. The City of Houston contributed to complex discussions on public rights of way, autonomous vehicles, infrastructure funding, and transit networked companies. Ms. Town mentions the Mayor's Office continues to monitor the status of the of the Senate Better Care Reconciliation Act and works to understand how the bill would impact Houston if it passes. Following, another update in previous versions of the bill, Texas stood to lose \$62 billion dollars in Federal funding from cuts to Medicaid, Federal funding for Medicaid, CHIP, & other critical programs. Texas has the highest rates of uninsurance in the country, and Houston has the highest rates of uninsurance in our region. Houston is the fastest growing city in the country, and that is usually something that we are very proud about. Our anticipated growth in light of this healthcare bill, we will see an even greater number of people without health insurance. She then mentions the MOPD is delighted to work with the Houston Public Libraries to ensure that a portion of their publicly available computers are equipped with assistive technology. She reminded everyone the Abilities Expo is August 4th through August 6th and thanked those who have already signed up to staff the HCOD and MOPD table. Another event mentioned was White Cane Safety Day which will be held on October 19th. Ms. Town mentioned more details as we get closer to the event. Lastly, Metro has embarked on the creation of METRONext, the new regional transit plan, and Metro wants to know what kind of transit system would best meet the needs of you and your family. In order to gather stakeholder feedback, Metro is hosting a series of in-person and virtual community forums over the next two months. To learn more about MetroNext and identify opportunities to participate go to metronext.org/participate

MOPD Staff Report-Angel Ponce announced his trip to California to attend the coalition for Latinos with disabilities. Some things that were discussed included disability, immigration issues and fear of deportation among illegal immigrants that have disabilities.

Committee Reports:

Commissioner Palacios share with us that after eight years of providing services to women with disabilities through the women with disabilities empowerment fair which started as a one year event that offered empowerment services to women with disabilities and now have an office here at WGMSC. They are going to be having monthly empowerment workshops, disability theme creative writing workshop classes. NWEF.org is our website.

Marketing-Commissioner Sims reported she was a little behind in posting on Facebook. Her nonprofit moved and they're just getting set up.

Emergency Preparedness-Commissioner Townsend reported UH is having a transition resource fair at the Shriners' hospital. That's July 20th for parents, children parents with children and young adults with disabilities. They're going to have about 32 vendors there who will be talking to parents about the resources that they have and how they can access them. Also, Jewish family service center is having a parents and care givers together on Monday, August 28th, from 6:30 to 8:00. It's IDD and dementia, Alzheimer, how it presents and how to help, it's free. Lastly, she informed the theater Deb Nowenski was director of changed its heading. So, the parents wanted to continue theater for children, young adults with disabilities. They're having a first annual beginner's stars' dance on Saturday, August 12th from 6:00 to 9:00 at Salem evangelical Lutheran church. It's \$10 for each young adult that comes to the event and for parents also.

HARP- Commissioner Jesse shared that the applications submitted before July 1st have been reviewed and will be contacted if selected.

Employment-Commissioner Aceves- No updates

Metro/Transportation/Parking-Commissioner Williams reported for accessibility, she did turn a few months ago to the par program an address where she was having difficulty. She wanted to let us know it was completed, and it went above and beyond because she had issues with one driveway, and that was directly behind the Walgreens.

Police Response to Persons with Disability-Commissioner Eziashi reported a state-wide meeting last week and had swat team over there and they discussed about how to approach different individuals, and they didn't have the knowledge of how to approach the people in Houston. The swat also provided smoke alarms for the deaf and hard of hearing, also to help them in dangerous situations, and that was all from last Tuesday.

Commissioner McCulloch announced the date is September 30th for DUPC. Will be here at this facility, 9:00 a.m. to 1:30 ish. Asked if anybody that would like to volunteer to help plan, they can always use additional volunteers. Any commissioners or anybody in the communities that would like to help out, send them their way.

Strategic Planning-Commissioner Cole shared strategic planning committee is making sure they cover all our bases as far as identifying what issues the community wants us to focus on. They've reached out to several organizations and are putting together a questionnaire. They've talked to the folks at the

multipurpose center about getting it out so they can make sure they get input. They've gotten input back from the united spinal association. They provided a list of hot topics Mr. Cole will provide to the whole committee. Some of the things on the list including transportation, which several sub categories including lack of communication and education of option, transportation to and from suburbs, Uber, taxis, airlines, infrastructure, sidewalks, parking lots, buildings, accessible parking, support services, and medical services were all on the list.

Metropolitan MSC -Mr. French reported the pool at WGMSC is closed and should be up and running by Friday afternoon. He also spoke about summer programs which they are in the middle of right now such as sports leagues, wheelchair basketball, wheelchair rugby, adaptive team off season strength conditioning groups on Tuesday nights, and Texas aquatics. He informed that the next meeting at lake Houston will be August 5th. No registration required. Show up. Go to Texas adaptive aquatics look them up on Facebook. He continued by thanking the blinded veterans of America group for writing a letter of recommendation in their application for a VA adaptive sports grant for 2018. They'll be hosting the blinded veterans group meeting in September at the WGMSC and give them a tour and show them around and hopefully get things going with them at that meeting. He mentions their last wheelchair slalom event is Tuesday, August 5th and this past Tuesday was their last practice for veterans going to national veteran's wheelchair games next week in Cincinnati. Lastly, he wanted to welcome the national women with disabilities empowerment forum. They'll share office space in the back and hopefully expand our programming and partnership and what we do for women with disabilities.

ADA Coordinator- Mr. Russel reported the ADA is in a new fiscal year now, hoping to find money for training and overtime. They're busy doing ADA training throughout the city.

Adjourn at 6pm Chair Petty motion to adjourn. Second by Commissioner Townsend.