

The Houston Commission on Disabilities Meeting Minutes for July 12, 2018

The Houston Commission on Disabilities met on Thursday, July 12, 2018, at the Houston Metropolitan Multi-Service Center (MMSC), 1475 West Gray, Houston, Texas 77019.

Chair, Richard Petty, called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM with there being a quorum present.

Commissioners Present: Michael McCulloch, Toby Cole, Benigno Aceves , Richard Petty, Emmanuel Eziashi, George Powers, Eileen Edmonds, Shelley Townsend, Asha Dhuka, Khafilat Oyindamola Adesokan, Sara Freeman Smith, and Tina Williams

Commissioners Absent: Lesa Jackson Lazard, Erica Fletcher, Maria Palacios and Mark Potts

Ex Officio Present: Maria Town, Director, Angel Ponce -Trevizo, Amanda Boyd, Jess Faerman and Annie Potts

Ex Officio Absent: MOPD, Matt Russell, ADA Coordinator

Legal Present: Tiffany Evans

Chair Petty opened the meeting at 4:00 by welcoming the audience and the commissioners. Chair Petty stated that there were two important presentations, one in which the new head of the boards and commissions will be introduced and the second would be the opening of membership slots for new commissioners. In addition, there will be a report on Hurricane Harvey recovery and we will hear from one of our important city departments.

Minutes were approved: Commissioner Cole

Seconded by Commissioner McCullough

Public Comments:

Mr. Robin Harris stated that if the possibility of a listening form could be looked at with Metro lift that would be great. He stated that having something in place like that would put more pressure on them so that they would know that eyes are on them. He feels that when complaints are made to customer service department that Metro is not keeping in compliance for consumers to be able to access their services.

Chair Petty suggested that he contact the Southwest Center on the ADA, the Americans with Disabilities Act. They also deal with other disability rights laws. Chair Petty asked Commissioner Powers to reach out to him.

Director Maria Town introduced the new Director of Boards and Commissions, Maria Del Pilar Montes. Director Montes spoke to us briefly about her background and how excited she was to begin work as the Director of Boards and Commissions.

Director Del Pilar Montes said that part of her role is to work with all of the volunteers that serve on the other boards and commissions and that there are approximately between 140 and 180 boards and commissions.

During her speech, Commissioner Powers arrived. After her speech, Chair Petty explained to Commissioner Powers about the concerns of the consumer during public comment and Commissioner Powers said that they would communicate with him after the meeting.

The next speaker that was introduced was from the Housing and Community Development, Mary Itz. Chair Petty asked that Director Town introduce her. Director Town stated that Ms. Itz is a planner at the Housing and Community Development Department. One of her focus is in specialty grants.

Ms. Itz stated that she was the principal planner with the Housing and Community Development Department. She talked about the approximately 1.15 billion dollars that her department would be receiving in Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery Action (CDBG-DR) plans to assist with consumers affected by Hurricane Harvey. She talked about how the monies would be used and what are their priorities. She said that there would be funding for repairs, rebuilding and relocation and also to make neighborhood improvements. She said that there are certain steps that the city and the county are required to report on in developing a plan in the recovery process to receive the housing recovery funds.

She stated that there would be level needs assessment-income levels, demographics, locations, from those affected by the storm. The department has a 14-day comment period for the public comment. Local needs assessment are working with outside contractors on what happened and who was impacted by the storm.

On their website, they have a summary document, and overview of their public engagement.

www.glo.texas.gov

www.houstontx.gov/housing

Upcoming events will be communicated on Facebook or twitter.

Ms. Itz took questions from the commissioners first and then from the public audience.

Chair Petty thanked her for being there.

MOPD Director's Report

Director Town thanked Ms. Itz for being there. Director Town reported on the following activities of MOPD.

- She talked about the guidance that MOPD has given the City of Houston Office of Emergency Management and to the Texas Department of Emergency management on the functionality of the evacuation tracking network system and evacuation plans for the city of Houston
- DHS has a listening session that it will host on July 3, if you are interested please follow-up with Maria
- US Government Accountability Offices (GAO) Report to the Congressional special committee on aging on the experiences of people with disabilities and older adults during the 2017 hurricane season
- MOPD has been asked to do additional reporting with GAO
- J&R Medical thank them for supplies-kudos to Angel
- Neighborhood Recovery center will be located here at the Metropolitan Multiservice center with MOPD
- Wednesday, City Council appointed four people to the metro board, three were reappointments-one was Lex. During this process discussion about more accessible bus stops was done.
- Thank Commissioner Williams for her leadership of the Transportation committee.
- Co-Hosted a meeting with Commissioner Ellison-Park Smart Initiative that focused on the disability community's priorities for bike trails and parks and accessibility, public safety, recreation that would benefit the entire community
- HCOD definition ordinance and has gone to the ordinance writing team and is being reviewed
- Revamp of social media policy, MOPD is providing guidance on embedding accessibility requirements in communications via Facebook, twitter, reddit, Pin interests

- Agreement between the city and Microsoft are exploring applying the internet to enhance Houston's smart city footprint
- MOPD and Independent Research Utilization program at TIRR-engaged in cooperative initiative in access to health care for people with disabilities and older adults.
- MOPD is working towards administering surveys to identify barriers in the community surrounding health care; this will be in partnership with Amerigroup under the banner of the Houston Livable Communities Initiative. Community meetings will be held around the city
- MOPD has partnered with the planning of the Houston ART Partners annual Conference- Conference is focused on students with learning disabilities to English language learners to gifted and talented students. The conference is in planning stages and they are seeking proposals from anyone who would be interested in presenting.
- Next week is Disability Voting Registration Week- Events will be held across the city to help register people with disabilities to vote. Registrars will be here at MMSC.

Director Town also mentioned other events that the city of Houston focused on.

MOPD Staff Report

Angel gave report on phone calls received, on questions regarding the ADA, on accessibility, durable medical equipment, and outreach to the community and sidewalk repairs.

Future presentations and speaking engagements:

- June 23 Presentation made on behalf of the Mayor to the Mr. Wonderful Pageant, which is a pageant for young boys and men with cognitive and/or physical disabilities.
- July 17th Presentation -Crane World Logistics Company staff on Mobility etiquette and emergency management for people with disabilities. Angel and Commissioner Townsend will do the presentation.
- June 20th HCOD employment committee will speak to the community health choice

- July 27th- Sam Houston State university speaking to students and focusing on inclusion in the workplace

Chair Petty talked a little more about the upcoming Abilities Expo and what a wonderful experience it is and he encouraged the commissioners to participate.

Commissioner Powers stated the event on this Saturday at the Houston Livable Communities Initiative is at the Third Ward Multiservice Center -11am to 1pm. It is a great opportunity for people in the community to come out and discuss how we can make the community more accessible whether it is transportation, housing, employment of medical needs. Encouraged everyone to come.

Announcements reported from the Commissioners Committees:

- Community and Transit Access (Tina Williams, Chair)

Chair Williams stated that they are working on a symposium for service animals, for comfort animals and are breaking down all of needs to get a clear understanding of what we want to put together. Inviting other commissioners as well as those in any transportation industries to take part in the planning of the symposium.

Chair Williams stated that they are working to resolve some issues with metro lift.

Chair Petty asked Commissioner McCullough to report on the focus group who are working on the intersection safety.

Commissioner McCullough stated that -Texas A&M Transportation Institute is focusing on study-smart intersections. They have been going around comprising information from various focus groups-blind focus group and Spanish-speaking groups looking at what kind of issues one may have with safety in navigating an intersection from the way signals-audible or visible signals can impact the safety.

In addition, Metro is currently looking into the public transportation system. Another Transportation related issues-Metro Accessibility Tasks Force-several weeks ago in the fall they will have four pilot smart bus-shelters.

- Disability Unity and Pride Celebration (Maria Palacios, Chair)

Since Commissioner Palacio was not present to report, Commissioner McCullough reported for the committee.

Commissioner McCullough stated that the committee is scheduled to meet in July, next Tuesday. Guest speakers have been secured, the performers are lined up, they are working to secure volunteers, and the website on Facebook has information for signing up. The date is – Saturday, September 29th. And it will be here at the MMSC.

- Education (Eileen Edmonds, Chair, absent)

No report

- Emergency Preparedness, Response, and recovery (Shelley Townsend, Chair)

Commissioner Townsend stated that she had not met with anyone because she was heading off the commission and did not want to start the process and someone would have to take over. Therefore, we are looking for someone to head this committee.

- Employment and Transition to Employment (Benigno Aceves, Chair)

The Employment Committee meets the 2nd Thursday-before the commissioners meeting Today they had a speaker from Baker Ripley named Britney Aleman to come and talk about their program that help individuals with applying to college. She also talked about the services on immigration, their English classes, their English work classes and the services that they offer in the VA. In addition, she talked about services that they offer to college ready adults who are looking for work and seniors as well. Their contact information is 832-571-7543 713-944-9185, baleman@bakerripley.org

One goal on 2018 is to provide more outreach and more awareness presentations to employers or organizations on diversity, etiquette, benefits and why they should hire people with disabilities. .

Chair Aceves talked about the 3rd Annual Leaping into employment event that they have. He talked about the difficulty of choosing dates that were not colliding with other disability events. He stated that the event will be around the end of February or early March. They are looking for volunteers.

Chair Aceves stated that White Cane Safety Day will be held on October 18 2018, City Hall from 9:30 am to 1pm. They will have 30 to 40 exhibitors, and a downtown march.

Side note – Special Olympics fundraiser-November 16th and 17th- Embassy Suites, repel off the side of the buildings. www.sotx.org/overthedge

Housing and Tenancy ()

No report

- Law Enforcement and First Responder Response to the Disability Community (Emmanuel Eziashi, Chair)

Last week went to Washington DC-Deaf Disability Event and talked to them about what the work that the city is doing here with the deaf community. Last Sunday did a training with about 68 cadets-at the police academy and talked to them about what they need to

think about when pulling over an individual that has a disability and what to do in those type of situations.-

- Public Awareness (Mark Potts, Chair absent)

Pass

- Strategic Planning and Commission Membership (Toby Cole, Chair)

Trying to get five positions filled. Commissioner Cole stated that he emailed a survey to commissioners about what committees they wanted to serve on. We do not want you to be a committee of one.

Metropolitan Multipurpose Service Center – (Chuck French/Hannah Walker)

Ms. Walker said that Chucks out of town doing Wheelchair Rugby. Ms. Walker, talked about the different activities that they had Wheelchair fitness groups, the UH Wheelchair Rugby Camp, Texas Adaptive Aquatics at lake Houston, Sailing at the Sea Star Bass Galveston, Beep going to national conference .

Ms. Walker stated that August 13-Fund raiser would be at West Gray-local rap artists to play basketball and Free Throw contests.

Commissioner McCullough-thanked MMSC for acquiring the two tandem bikes and he wants to help set up schedule to get them used.

Chair Petty asked if Lawyer Evans had anything to share and she stated no.

Commissioner Townsend thanked everyone and the Commissioners for everything. She stated that she enjoyed serving on the commission with everyone and that it gave her a wealth of knowledge that she can share with other families in the community.

Chair Petty thanked Commissioner Townsend for her wonderful work. Chair Petty reminded everyone about Abilities Expo.

A motion was made to adjourn Commissioner Emmanuel Eziashi

Commissioner Sara Freeman Smith seconded

The HCOD meeting adjourned at 5:50 pm.

Minutes submitted by Shelley Townsend (satownse@central.uh.edu 713-743-5491).

Please submit any corrections to Shelley Townsend.