

The Houston Commission on Disabilities Meeting Minutes for October 11, 2018

The Houston Commission on Disabilities met on Thursday, October 11, 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: Maria Palacios, Toby Cole, George Powers, Richard Petty, Tina Williams, Emmanuel Arizona Eziashi, Benigno Aceves Jr., Eileen Edmonds, Shelley Townsend, Mark Potts

Commissioners Absent: Asha Dhuka, Michael McCulloch, Sara Freeman Smith, Khafilat Adesokan

Ex Officio Present: Angel Ponce-Trevizo, Amanda Boyd, Annie Bacon, Alex Chou

Ex Officio Present: Maria Town, Director, MOPD

Legal Present: Tiffany Evans

Richard opened the meeting by stating that as part of last month's training received to be Volunteer Deputy Voter Registrar, everyone should have received their certificates and are registering people to vote.

Chair Petty asked for a motion for the September minutes to be approved. Motion by Commissioner Toby Cole, and it was second by Commissioner Emmanuel Eziashi. The HCOD minutes for September 13, 2018, were approved.

Chair Petty explained the process of public comment and asked if there were any public comments. MOPD staff Angel Ponce stated that there were no public comments. Chair Petty then asked that MOPD Director Maria Town was the asked to give her Monthly report.

MOPD Director's Report

Director Town, talked about Proposition B and quoted the Mayor's review of Proposition B. Prop A establishes a dedicated pay as you go, drainage and streets improvements on the ballot. Prop. B- Firefighters 25% raise.

Director Town talked about the Texas Department of Emergency Management and the ADA webinar. In September, The American Council of the Blind had an event. Director Town spoke about how wonderful the Disability Unity Pride Celebration was and complimented the committee and everyone who participated. She also announced the White Cane Safety Day upcoming event.

She shared some history on the first HCOD meeting that was held on October 7, 1993. The commissioners were given a copy of the very first agenda and what was noted is that some 25 years later the issues are still the same and just as important.

MOPD Staff Report

MOPD Angel Ponce gave his monthly report on how their office has assisted the disability community in giving out assistance, supports and information and referrals. This month the MOPD office provided outreach to 700 people. The services that they assist the disability community with was: ADA, apartment assistance, Harvey Recovery issues, legal assistance, sidewalk repairs, rental assistance, SSI & Benefits, South Texas College of law, tax assistants, tenancy and housing assistance, visual fire alarms, waste management and home modifications.

They are working with Houston Public works on making the application process easier and more accessible for our citizens. Mr. Ponce talked about his new appointment as co-chair for the United Way. He gave us meeting times and invited other commissioners to become involved.

Chair Petty introduced the initial speakers for the meeting: Michelle Colvard was there to talk about the Accessibility of West 11th Street Park. Along with Ms. Colvard was Helen Shumway (Friends of West 11th Street Park Board President) and Robert Delgado, (Friends of West 11th Street Park Board Members).

This group presented on the possibility on forming a partnership with the commission to identify what changes need to be made to the park so that they can know what needs to be improved for people with disabilities who may visit the park. The commission was given history on the park and what they have accomplished so far and they invited the commissioners to come and spend a day at the park.

The group was also hoping that the commission could help them work towards improvements by helping them identify funding sources. The group has set up a website so that the community can find out more about the park. Ms. Colvard talked about the potential to collaborate with nonprofits who are serving kids with various disabilities.

Commissioners asked question of the group and answers were provided. Commissioners also made some suggestions to the group.

Director Town suggested that the group ask the commissioners who are sitting on the Houston Park Board for assistance with funding.

Chair Petty asked for a report from the MMSC. They were not present at the moment. Chair Petty asked if the public had any questions and those were addressed by the representatives of the West 11th Street Park Board.

The commission was asked if they wanted members of the Park Board to come and present to the commission. A motion was made by Commissioner Eileen Edmonds and seconded by Commissioner Tina Williams. Director Town stated that IDD and Psychiatric Disabilities were not included in the presentation so it is important to include them. A motion was entertained and all of the commission were in favor and the motion carried.

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Committee Updates

Community and Transit Access (Tina Williams, Chair)

At our last meeting, we discussed the upcoming symposium and assignments have been given to everyone. We are looking for a location that has good acoustics. We want to invite everyone in the transportation industry to participate. We have been reviewing the glossary for the lingo to use for service animals. Our next meeting will be a conference call, because everyone's schedule does not fit with attending in person. The time will be on Tuesday at 2pm.

Chair Petty talked about the Air Travel Passengers with Disabilities Air Carrier Access Act. There are specific definitions of what a service animal is. Chair Petty stated that Dog Guide users and service animals need to be addressed. Chair Petty stated that at the end that there was a symposium on pedestrian and bike safety, operated by link Houston and kinder institute here in Houston. They are aware that some people with disabilities were present but this would be a good idea to keep in the forefront. He talked about the dangerous intersections and at future meetings, we might address the issues however, it may not resolve but in the future may be able to do so. Paralyzed Veterans of Americans Campaign, wheelchair users, and air travel trying to push airlines to be better at how they handle their chairs.

Disability Unity and Pride Celebration (Maria Palacios, Chair)

Chair Palacios, talked about being grateful and honored to chair the committee. Thanked everyone for the opportunity to serve. Invite other commissioners to serve on the committee for the event for next year. They will be taking a short break for a few weeks and then return on Tuesday meetings from 5pm to 6pm. We will be meeting on planning for next year.

Education (Eileen Edmonds, Chair)

Chair Edmonds stated that the committee is putting together a consortium to serve adults with disabilities so that we can participate with the Barbara Bush foundation for family literacy. They are putting proposals together this month. Saturday October 27th is the HISD Parent Summit. Focus for October is to put together a list of adult programs that work with adults with intellectual disabilities. AAA put together an aging guide, and JFC puts together an annual guide for youth with disabilities.

Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Recovery (Shelley Townsend, Chair)

Chair Townsend stated that the Extreme Weather Committee met on September 25. The committee looked at the survey from the event and talked about the good and bad comments. Chair Townsend stated that next year's event would be held on June 8, 2019.

Employment and Transition to Employment (Benigno Aceves, Chair)

They have not met because they are waiting for Texas Workforce Commission, to inform them about them when they can meet. The event will happen in 2019. Waiting to schedule a meeting with TWC Transition Specialists.

White Cane Safety Day - October 18- Director Town and Commissioner Aceves did an interview on FM 91. Commissioner Aceves thanked Director Town. Commissioner Aceves talked about the history of why the day exists. ABC Channel 13 Melonie Lawson will emcee and host the event.

Housing and Tenancy- (no chair)

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

Commissioner Eziashi stated that last Tuesday, he had surgery and is currently recovering so he did not have a report at this meeting.

Public Awareness (Mark Potts, Chair)

No Report

Strategic Planning and Commission Members (Toby Cole, Chair and Sara Freeman-Smith, Co-Chair)

Chair Cole stated that they have some very good candidates for the commission and that they are real excited about the new prospects.

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

Ms. Barbara Aguirre, Recreational Assistant reported for the Metropolitan MSC. She talked about the various activities that MMSC was involved in this month such as the wheelchair rugby tournament, hand cycling activities.

ADA Update - (absent position)

Director Town stated that the position for the ADA coordinator was publicly posted however, there is a hiring freeze for the city of Houston. The qualifications of what the job required was mentioned in the meeting.

Chair Petty acknowledged Legal Ms. Evans and asked if we needed to hear from her.

Commissioners' Comments

Commissioner Petty stated that about the importance of pedestrian safety and he hopes that the commissioners can address it as the city addresses it also. If there is no other business upcoming before the next meeting.

No other comments from commissioners.

The HCOD meeting adjourned at 6:00 PM.

Motion to adjourn: Commissioner Tina Williams

Second: Commissioner Toby Cole

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

Please submit any corrections to Shelley Townsend.