

Correction

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

The following contains the meeting minutes from April 12, 2018. Items that were not part of the original meeting minutes are shown in italics and bold.

The Houston Commission on Disabilities met on Thursday, April 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, George Powers, Shelley Townsend, Richard Petty, Emmanuel Eziashi, Sara Freeman Smith, Eileen Edmonds, Mark Potts, Asha Dhuka and Tina Williams

Commissioners Absent: Lesa Jackson Lazard, Maria Palacios, Benigno Aceves, Khafilat Oyindamola Adesokan, Erica Fletcher,

Ex Officio Present: Maria Town, Director, Angel Ponce -Trevizo, Jess Faerman

Ex Officio Absent: MOPD, Matt Russell, ADA Coordinator

Legal Present: Tiffany Evans

Chair Petty opened the meeting and stated that we would proceed with the minutes prepared from last month's meeting. He asked for a motion on the floor and a motion to adopt the minutes. The minutes were approved.

Public Comments:

Chair Petty asked for one of the commissioners to officiate over the public comment section. Public comment came from Mr. Charles LeDay-a representative from the Texas Recovery program. He stated that the city was still receiving funds for the housing and rebuilding of Houston. This program is grant funded through October 31st. The focus of this program is for the Homeless community and the disabled community. Questions were posed about the program to Mr. LeDay from the commissioners and also from the audience and were answered. Mr. LeDay was thanked for his public comments. Mr. LeDay was a former commissioner.

Chair Petty acknowledged and welcomed back Commissioner Tina Williams.

Chair Petty, gave the floor over to Maria Town, Director, MOPD who stated that all of the commissioners should have received copies of the current ordinance and the proposed draft of the HCOD ordinance. Director Town stated that HCOD is 25 years old and that she is very certain that the current ordinance has not been updated since 1993. Director Town read through the ordinance with the commissioners and the public audience. Director Town stated that the process to update the ordinance would follow these steps: Approval by the Mayor, the City of Houston Legal Team, Assignment of an attorney, Draft of an ordinance, Public comment and hearing before a committee.

Director Town stated that the amendment can pass or fail. A motion would be in order for HCOD to make a recommendation to City Council and the legal team about the commission's position on this motion.

Director Town presented a possible version of changes to the HCOD authorizing ordinance that shifts its definition to focus on functional impacts of disability rather than specific diagnoses. The proposed change also eliminates language now considered offensive by the disability community.

Director Town also encouraged the Commission provide feedback on changes they would like to see.

Chair Petty asked for a motion from the commissioners. Commissioner McCullough so moved and Commissioner Eziashi second it.

Discussion from the commissioners.

Commissioner Williams asked Director Town if whether the definition was changing. Director Town responded that it was up to the commissioners and also if we, the commissioners thought that other parts of the ordinance should be changed. Director Town stated that the motion was for MOPD to be engaged. Commissioner Cole made a comment and Legal Evans stated that it would be an online surveys which would be good to calculate, other forms of engagement can be presentations made to neighborhood groups,

Discussion on the length of time that the process would take were posed to Legal Representative Evans and she stated that it may take time to go through this process.

Chair Petty stated that with the many priorities that the commission has to focus on that we may need to use other avenues to go through this process such as the website, the HCOD facebook page one meeting. He asked the commission to think about the level of work that MOPD has now.

Director Town posed the question as to whether the ordinance needs to be updated. The commission agreed. Another discussion on the use of language that other disability groups may view differently as far as definitions and the fact that there may be some disagreement among the various disability groups on the definitions. There was a motion on the floor and the motion carried. Maria will work on this.

Questions were accepted from the public.

Audience question: Will amendment include the undocumented disability community. Response from Director Town: the current ordinance does not specify any citizen status or documentation.

Audience question: Will it include sections about accommodations? Director Town stated that it could include accommodations.

Audience question: Is the ordinance in line with the federal definition. Director Town's response: There is an opportunity to make it align.

Other comments about the ordinance were made by the audience and acknowledged or answered.

Director Town gave updates on the process from Hurricane Harvey and stated that MOPD is still referring folks to case management. There are new requirements for homes being built based on the new flood plans. There will be a meeting in May from the National Council on Disability here in Houston on May 9th. The Commissions will be briefed about this meeting.

Reports were made from MOPD by Angel Ponce who shared monthly data to the commission on outreaches and services that they provided to the Houston Community.

Angel also spoke about the Extreme Weather Ready Expo that will happen on Saturday June 2nd in HALL E at the George R. Brown Convention Center. He stated that he will email a sign in sheet for the commissioners to identify time slots to man the two tables that MOPD/HCOD have for that event.

Chair Petty suggested that all commissioners attend this great event. Chair Petty thanked Director Town and Angel Ponce for their report.

Announcements reported from the Commissioners Committees:

Chair Petty stated he was going out of order with the committee reports. He asked that Vice Chair and the Chair of the Strategic Planning to streamline. Chair Petty asked Commissioner Cole to give us an overview of the structure of the planning committee.

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

Commissioner Cole stated that he wants to make sure that the Committee Chairs structures follow along with what we reflect that we want to do. Commissioner Cole sent out a committee list to all commissioners requesting that they state what committee that they were interested in and what the committees want to accomplish. He stated that there are commissioners who are chairing committees who may want to stay in that position. He asked that all chairs please fill out the form.

- Metro/Transportation/Parking & Parks & Accessibility will change to Community and Transit Access – (Tina Williams, Chair)
No report.

Commissioner Cole stated that he hopes it streamlines the work you are doing. Commissioner Cole also stated that accessibility checks need to be made to make sure that parks are accessible. Maybe a symposium for emotional support dog events. He stated that it was important to understand when rights are being violated and to know what the rights are so that one knows what they are fighting for. Needs info today if you are interested.

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

Chair Palacios is ill. Commissioner McCullough reports that various sub committees and chairs for each committee are being filled. The committee did decide not to do anything in the next 2 years but it will coincide with the 30 year anniversary of ADA. They are always looking for volunteers. The event is scheduled for September 30th

- Disability-Related Issues in Public Education will have a much broader title to include, public, private, homeschool all of it. Higher Education– (Eileen Edmonds, Chair)
No report.

- Emergency Preparedness (Shelley Townsend, Chair) will address more than preparedness

Commissioner Townsend reported on the last meeting held by the Extreme Weather Committee. She stated that all participants for the Functional Needs and Access Disability Panel have been contacted.

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

No updates

- Housing & Tenancy Issues (Lesa Jackson Lazard, Chair) - absent

No updates.

- Police Response to Persons with Disabilities- Changes will be made to the title at the next meeting to be called Law Enforcement and First Responder Response to the Disability Community - (Emmanuel Arizona Eziashi, Chair)

Commissioner Eziashi stated that the First Deaf Police Officer woman is located in a small town in the Austin area. Commissioner Eziashi stated that he missed the FBI presentations that came to present what the law looks like for the deaf committee. Commissioner Eziashi also mentioned about the shooting of a mental health citizen by a police officer, Commissioner Eziashi tried to schedule a meeting with them but was unsuccessful.

Commissioner Cole wants to join the committee and wants to engage other commissioners to sit on this committee but also to engage other disabilities when it comes to police officers. Commissioner Cole and Commissioner Eziashi will talk after the meeting.

- Marketing – Chair Petty stated that Marketing has changed to Public Awareness (Mark Potts, Chair)
No updates.

Chair Petty stated that the Strategic Planning committee has merged into the HARP committee.

VIII. Metropolitan MSC Update (Chuck French / Hannah Walker)-absent

No reports

Director Town made comments about the MMSC and stated that all three teams are in Kentucky for the National Basketball tournament. The MMSC Pool will be closed between June and September.

Director Town stated that she would be working with Director Wright to see if they can collaborate with U H and other community pools to get access for the disability community.

Chair Petty stated that Commissioner Fletcher had to resign due to change in job and job requirements so now there is a vacancy for her seat. The Strategic committee will identify a replacement.

ADA Update - Matt Russell, COH ADA Coordinator (absent)

No updates.

Legal-Tiffany does not have any updates.

Commissioners' Comments

Commissioner Potts had a question about sending out flyers and the process.

Commissioner Townsend asked who should information be sent to for community announcements on the Facebook page. Commissioner Potts identified himself as the receiver of the information.

Commissioner Williams announced that Greater Saint Matthew Church is having a Community Awareness event on Saturday, April 28 and that HCOD has been invited to participate.

Members of the Public Announcements:

The Multiple Sclerosis YMCA has made their pool available to people with M.S. Director Town will reach out to them.

Cornelius Booker stated that he would like to be put on a team to participate and volunteer with various committees of the commission. Mr. Booker was a former Chair and Commissioner.

Houston Zoo "Walk with Me is coming up this month.

Chair Petty thanked Mr. Booker for his interest in volunteering with the commission.

The HCOD meeting adjourned at 5:30 pm.

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

Please submit any corrections to Shelley Townsend.