

The Houston Commission on Disabilities Meeting Minutes for August 8, 2019

The Houston Commission on Disabilities met on Thursday, August 8, 2019, at the Houston Metropolitan Multi-Service Center (MMSC), 1475 West Gray, Houston, Texas 77019.

Chair Petty called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm with there being a quorum present. Chair Petty gave opening remarks by welcoming everyone to the meeting. Next Chair Petty asked Commissioner Potts to proceed with roll call.

Roll call of the Commissioners:

Present:

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Absent:

- Benigno Aceves Jr.
- Khafilat Adesokan
- Toby Cole
- Asha Dhuka
- Eileen Edmonds
- Emmanuel Arizona Eziashi
- Michael McCulloch
- Maria Palacios
- Richard Petty
- Mark Potts
- George Powers
- Sara Freeman Smith
- Shelley Townsend
- Tina Williams

MOPD Staff:

Present:

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Absent:

- Annie Bacon
- Amanda Boyd
- Alex Chou
- Jess Faerman
- Angel Ponce-Treviz

Ex-Officio

Present:

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Absent:

- Director, MOPD
- Marshall Watson, Administrator Coordinator – ADA, City of Houston, Human Resources Department, Civil Service & EEO Division

Legal

Present:

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Absent:

- Angelie Thomas

Chair Petty asked for a motion for the July minutes approval. Motion by Commissioner Toby Cole and seconded by Commissioner Shelley Townsend. The HCOD minutes for July 11, 2019 were approved.

Public Comments

Chair Petty explained the process of public comment. Angel Ponce introduced the following speakers.

- Jorge McGuinn - announced Jorge Tha Promotoer Day/Wheelchair Basketball Celebraity Fundraiser Game on August 11th. It will feature the Houston Adapted Sports Club vs. Houston Show Stoppers from 6 – 8 PM @ the Metropolitan Multiservice Center.
- Glenn Geise –shared his recent experience attending the Rolling Stones concert @ NRG Stadium. Mr. Geise shared a detailed document about the lack of accessibility and accommodations into and out of the facility including parking lots. MOPD and HCOD are going to follow up.

Angel Ponce stated that there were no more public comments.

Chair Petty thanked everyone for their public comments.

Speakers for today

Social Security Administration - Andy Hardwick, Public Affairs Specialist gave a presentation about the department and its programs.

Questions were asked by commissioners and answered and Commissioners made comments.

Questions were asked by the public and answered.

Chair Petty thanked everyone for their public comments.

Update on Hiring a New Director of MOPD

- Chair Petty shared that the position is open with interviews ongoing. The interview process is overseen by James Koski, Deputy, Chief of Staff, Office of the Mayor. The interview process is on track to wrap up soon.

MOPD Staff Report to the HCOD

- Angel Ponce & Alex Chou shared the updates for services provided in July:

Pedestrian Accessible Review Program

Type or Request: No Sidewalk – 1, Broken Sidewalk – 12, No Curb Cut / Ramp – 3

Location: South – 2, Southwest – 5, Southeast – 1, East – 1, North – 1, Denver Harbor – 1, Heights – 3, Downtown – 2

Total: 16

US. Immigration Services Table

Community Relations Officer, Rosa Ramirez with The U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services has set up a table at the MMSC a couple of times this year, including in July to provide informative brochures to participants with disabilities about the requirements to become naturalized, how to renew resident cards and who can assist with filling out applications (good resource: Bonding Against Adversity).

Ms. Ramirez, also provided additional information to participants on the accommodations provided to those that attend their naturalization ceremony. We hope to continue to see Ms. Ramirez more often here at the MMSC.

Public Health Heat Emergency Plan

The National Weather Service issued a heat advisory expected to remain in effect for Houston until 7 p.m. Thursday and additional advisories are possible through the weekend. Anyone living without air-conditioning can seek air-conditioned shelter at Houston Health Department (HHD) multi-service centers, designated as cooling centers. People without adequate transportation to a cooling center can call 3-1-1 to request a free ride from METRO.

The city will extend the hours of operations for the following facilities until 6 p.m. on Thursday and Friday and open them to the public from 12 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday: Sunnyside Multi-Service Center, Acres Homes Multi-Service Center, Northeast Multi-Service Center, Magnolia Multi-Service Center, and Houston Central Library, Jesse H. Jones Building, will open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday and from 12 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Sunday.

ADA Training

The MOPD attended an ADA Training hosted by the SWADA at the TIRR Research Building. At this training, the MOPD received training and a refresher on Title's 1-5, we asked questions about some of the different types of calls/visits we receive at the MOPD. MOPD plans to incorporate ADA knowledge and refresher questions into our weekly meetings to stay alert and informed.

Autonomous Vehicle Study

Jinuk Hwang is a Ph.D. student at Texas A&M University writing his dissertation on people with disabilities' perceptions of autonomous vehicle transportation (also known as driverless vehicles or "self-driving" cars)

The study focuses on adults with visual impairments and adults with physical disabilities living in the Austin and Houston areas. He is requesting assistance to distribute the online survey. Survey participants will be able to request a \$5 e-gift card from Walmart or Amazon. You must be a person with a visual impairment or a person with a physical disability to participate in the survey. Jess Faerman with MOPD, is working on a post on social media and email blast. More information about the survey is provided to you at the sign in table.

Vision Zero Houston

Mayor Turner recently announced the adoption of Vision Zero sparked by the deaths of two pedestrians crossing a street in the Heights area in March. The national Vision Zero network is designed to eliminate traffic deaths and serious injuries by 2030. The Mayor emphasized the network's principles: ethics, responsibility, safety and mechanisms for change, including that all roadway fatalities are preventable.

The Mayor has announced a Vision Zero Houston Press Conference to take place at the Julia Ideson library (550 McKinney St) on Tuesday, August 13 at 11:30 am. On this day, the Mayor is to sign Vision Zero Executive Order, a commitment to end traffic deaths by 2030. The Sidewalk Accessibility Task Force will also submit their final report in the fall.

Summer Youth Internship Update

The 2019 Hire Houston Youth Summer Jobs program has ended and the MOPD has reflected on the valuable and rewarding experiences our two summer interns have been involved in. We appreciate the contributions Interns Jackie Hoyos Ponce and Emmet Hagan provided to MOPD.

Chair Petty thanked Staff for their reports.

Committee Updates

Community and Transit Access (Tina Williams, Chair) - The Sidewalk Accessibility Task Force will submit their final report in the fall.

Disability Unity and Pride Celebration (Maria Palacios, Chair) – Commissioner Michael McCulloch shared that a dynamic event is planned for September 28 @ the MMSC.

Education (Eileen Edmonds, Chair) - No update at this time.

Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Recovery (Shelley Townsend, Chair) – thanked commissioners and MOPD staff for volunteering with Abilities Expo.

Employment and Transition to Employment (Benigno Aceves, Chair) – MOPD and HCOD are looking for volunteers to help man a table at City Hall for White Cane Safety Day. White Cane Safety Day is from 9:30 – 1 PM and the event brings awareness to people with blindness and visual, impairments, the importance of the white cane, and the service of guide dogs.

Housing and Tenancy (No Chair) - No update at this time.

Law Enforcement and First Responder Response to the Disability Community (Emmanuel Arizona Eziashi, Chair) - No update at this time.

Public Awareness (Mark Potts, Chair) - No update at this time.

Strategic Planning and Commission Membership (Toby Cole, Chair and Sara Freeman-Smith, Co-Chair) – 4 applicants for commissioner positions awaiting approval..

Metropolitan Multiservice Center (Hannah Walker) - Shared that pool hours have been restored and lifeguard positions have been filled. An emergency cord at the pool is currently being repaired. MMSC is currently seeking a water aerobics instructor. At the recent Abilities Expo MMSC staff hosted Tabata and Rugby for participants. And some MMSC participants had just returned from the first ever West Gray Adventure Day where they participated in a recreational outing to both Top Golf and Main Event

ADA Update - (Marshall Watson Administrative Coordinator – ADA, City of Houston, Human Resources Department, Civil Service & EEO Division) - Since many public comments at last month's HCOD meeting centered on limited pool hours and inaccessibility Mr. Watson has reached out to the Parks & Recreation Department for a review of availability and functionality of lifts at municipal pools. The list he received was incomplete. He will share a report next month.

Commissioners' Comments

The HCOD meeting adjourned at 5:55 PM.

Motion to adjourn: Commissioner Michael McCulloch.

Seconded: Commissioner Tina Williams.

Minutes submitted by Eileen Edmonds (eileen@tuts.com), (281) 797-3796.

Please submit any corrections to Eileen Edmonds