

The Houston Commission on Disabilities Meeting Minutes for February 14, 2019

The Houston Commission on Disabilities met on Thursday, February 14, 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. Chair Petty announced that the ReelAbilities expo is starting and there is a Transition Workshop on Saturday. Next Chair Petty asked Commissioner Potts to proceed with roll call.

Roll call of the Commissioners:

Commissioners Present: Toby Cole, Eileen Edmonds, Michael McCulloch, Richard Petty, Mark Potts, George Powers, Shelley Townsend, Tina Williams

Commissioners Absent: Benigno Aceves Jr., Khafilat Adesokan, Asha Dhuka, Emmanuel Arizona Eziashi, Maria Palacios, Sara Freeman Smith,

MOPD Staff Present: Angel Ponce-Trevizo, Amanda Boyd, Annie Bacon, Alex Chou, Jess Faerman

Ex-Officio Present: Maria Town, Director, MOPD

Ex-Officio Present: Marshall Watson, Administrator Coordinator – ADA, City of Houston, Human Resources Department, Employee/Labor Relations Division)

Legal Present: Tiffany Evans

Chair Petty asked for a motion for the January minutes approval. Motion by Commissioner Cole and seconded by Commissioner McCulloch. The HCOD minutes for January 10, 2019 were approved. Ex-Officio Town asked to edit the minutes due to misspelling of names. Motioned by Commissioner Cole and seconded by Commissioner McCulloch.

Public Comments

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

Meridith Silcox, accessibility coordinator from the YMCA. Meredith is spreading awareness about the YMCA's fully accessible facilities and accessible sports program.

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

Director Town asked about cost. Ms. Silcox stated the league is funded by grants.

Commissioner Cole asked about sports. Ms. Silcox stated baseball, football, cheer, kickball, adaptive swim lessons (there is a fee) are offered.

Commissioner Cole asked if the pools are accessible. Ms. Silcox stated that all YMCA pools accessible.

Commissioner Townsend asked about swim lessons availability. Ms. Silcox stated there is a pilot program and depending on the results other facilities will offer lessons.

Commissioner McCulloch asked if the two locations are on the MetroLift route. Ms. Silcox responded Kingwood is not, Langham Creek is.

Director Town asked about learning more about the programs. Ms. Silcox stated that the website has adaptive programming.

Chair Petty thanked Ms. Silcox for her comments.

Vince Morvillo the AIRA Corporation rep for Houston area shared information about AIRA.

AIRA is a technology that converts your cell phone into a sighted companion. The user calls an agent and the phone camera provides the agent video to guide the user.

AIRA is looking to establish a partnerships to lower the costs.

In addition, AIRA wants to find zones where the technology can be offered for free.

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

Chair Petty thanked him for him comments.

Chair Petty asked where there are IRA free zones and about Horizon the use of glasses.

Mr. Morvillo stated that Walgreens and city of Houston airports are free zones.

Mr. Morvillo stated that Horizon are glasses that are connected to the agent

Commissioner Cole inquired about the cost if you are not in an AIRA free zone.

Mr. Morvillo stated that there are different minutes based plans.

Commissioner Cole how can the commission would help and what partnerships does AIRA want to develop.

Mr. Morvillo stated that ARIA is focused upon bus stops and malls.

Commissioner McCulloch addressed adding convention locations and sports arenas.

Mr. Morvillo responded that AIRA would provide AIRA free zones to conventions if provided proper lead time.

Commissioner Cole offered to help create a partnership with the State Bar of Texas.

Russell Klein with 101 Mobility shared the results of a small project with Casa de Esperanza.

As part of the project they made a house accessible for a family with a child with cerebral palsy. 101 Mobility is looking to establish a national home improvement program for families that need an accessible house but cannot afford the cost. 101 Mobility asked for assistance to find a family in need and film the project. Russell can be contacted at rklein@101mobility or (202) 365-5141.

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

Chair Petty if the participants need to own their house. Mr. Klein stated that permission needs to be given to modify a structure. Further, any other scenario would be complicated.

Director Town asked if the program was interested in adults with disability rather than a family.

Mr. Klein stated that anyone can participate

Chair Petty thanked him for him comments.

Andie Palagi from ReelAbilities Film Festival made an official invitation for the Commission to come to the Tuesday evening show. Ms. Palagi informed the commission that Lex Freedman would be the MC. The festival is free and metro lift is available.

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

Chair Petty thanked her for her comments.

Angel Ponce stated that there were no more public comments.

Chair Petty thanked Ms. Guess-Jeffries and Ms. Marshall for their presentation.

Chair Petty thanked everyone for their public comments.

Speakers for today

Chair Petty and Ex officio Town introduced the speakers for the day, Sarah Marshal, Administrative Fair Housing Coordinator, City of Houston Housing and Community Development Department and Yolanda Guess-Jefferies Fair Housing Coordinator, City of Houston Housing and Community Development Department.

Ms. Guess-Jefferies spoke about the Fair Housing Act, Fair Housing history the law and how it affects people with disability. The history of housing discrimination in Houston was illustrated via photos and color coded maps. Guidance for complaints was provided. April is Fair Housing month, a social day challenge is being instituted.

Ms. Marshal spoke about Landlord Tenants Relations. Guidance on landlord responsibilities, tenant responsibilities and the eviction process was provided. Guidance for complaints was provided.

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.

MOPD Director's Report

- Director Town wished everyone Happy Valentine's day and read a short poem about disability rights.
- In January the federal and state governments released block grant disaster relief
 - There are five programs
 - Reimbursement for repairs
 - Homeowner rehabilitation
 - City home rehabilitation
 - Buyouts
 - Interim mortgage assistance
 - One can take a survey online or call 832-393-0950 or visit one of the four assistance centers
- MOPD contributed to a report written Living Hope Wheelchair
- MOPD to participated in a conference related to transportation
- MOPD to host four tax preparation workshops 3/8 3/9 4/8 4/9
- MOPD has worked with a variety of entities related to enhancing accessibility
 - Clayton library
 - Precinct 1 pool
 - Adrian Garcia who is interested in accessible parks
 - Partnered with IDD employment working group to promote greater employment of people with disability.
 - Finished evaluation of 40 intersections for installation of audible pedestrian signals.
- MOPD presented at the Family 2 Family conference
- MOPD has a speaker request form for organizations that would like to speak at HCOD
- Monday is the HireYouth program which the mayor started to employ youth. Mayor Turner wants at least 10,000 individuals employed,
- In 2018 MOPD served 11,600 individuals

MOPD Staff Report

MOPD Staff Jess Fareman gave the monthly report for January: MOPD assisted the disability community with calls about; accessibility, adaptive sports, apartment assistance, ASL interpreters, Child and adult care, durable medical equipment, employment questions, emergency preparedness, financial inclusion, Harvey recovery, home modifications, immigration questions, legal assistance, outreach, Social Security benefits, legal issues with South Texas College of Law, transportation, utility

assistance, visual fire alarms, waste management or solid waste, Homelessness and shelters. Their office helped 542 people this month.

Mr. Ponce and Commissioner Aceves worked with CAGG to discuss a variety of disabilities and accommodations in the workplace. Leap in to Employment has partnered with Texas Workforce Solutions. The workshop will take place on April 12 from 9:00 -1:00 at Region 4.

The floor was open for commissioners to ask questions. Questions were asked and answered. The floor was open to the public for questions and they were answered.

Chair Petty thanked Director Town and MOPD Staff for their reports.

Committee Updates

Community and Transit Access (Tina Williams, Chair)

No Report. Committee to meet in near future.

Disability Unity and Pride Celebration (Maria Palacios, Chair)

Absent no report

Education (Eileen Edmonds, Chair)

Met with disability policy fellow Ric Atkins from F2F to discuss platforms to support regarding HISD and state advocacy. Beginning to strategically forge a path forward.

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

HCOD emergency response committee met and discussed the theme and speakers for the Extreme Weather Ready Expo.

Employment and Transition to Employment (Benigno Aceves, Chair)

Absent no report

Housing and Tenancy (No Chair)

No Report

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

Absent no report

Public Awareness (Mark Potts, Chair)

No Report

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

One application waiting for approval by Mayor Turner. Three applications are under review.

Metropolitan Multiservice Center – (Chuck French/Hannah Walker)

Mr. French announced the MMC pool has a new filtration system. A chemical feeder hookup needs to be connected before pool can be opened to the public.

ADA Update - (Marshall Watson Administrative Coordinator – ADA, City of Houston, Human Resources Department, Employee/Labor Relations Division)

No Update

Commissioners' Comments

Director Town announced that Mayor Turner will present a letter to pool providers to ask them to provide free access.

Mr. French asked for committee help on viewing new lights in pool.

Director Town announced that MOPD has a new sound system

Commissioner McCulloch announced Metro completed the Metro Next survey.

The HCOD meeting adjourned at 6:01 pm. Motion to adjourn: Commissioner Cole. Seconded: Commissioner Townsend.

Minutes submitted by Mark Potts (potts60@hotmail.com, 713-444-1222).

Please submit any corrections to Mark Potts.