

The Houston Commission on Disabilities Meeting Minutes for July 8, 2021

The Houston Commission on Disabilities met on Thursday, July 8, 2021. Social distancing guidance in response to the COVID-19 pandemic prompted the Commission to meet online through Zoom.

Chair Aguillard called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm with a quorum present and welcomed attendees to the meeting. Next, Chair Aguillard asked Commissioner Edmonds to proceed with the roll call.

Roll call of the Commissioners:

Present	Position 1: Ismael Garcia Cantu
Present	Position 2: Ricky Don Harris
Present	Position 3: Ann M. Bacon
Absent	Position 4: Daquan Minor
Absent	Position 5: Raul A. Gallegos
Present	Position 6: Richard Petty - Chair Emeritus
Present	Position 7: Tina Williams
Present	Position 8: Kimberly Aguillard - Chair
Present	Position 9: Sara Freeman Smith
Present	Position 10: Meridith Silcox
Present	Position 11: Eileen Edmonds
Present	Position 12: Mark Potts
Unfilled	Alternate 1: Vacant
Unfilled	Alternate 2: Vacant
Unfilled	Alternate 3: Vacant
Unfilled	Alternate 4: Vacant
Present	Ex-Officio: Gabriel Cazares, Director, MOPD
Present	Human Resources: Marshall Watson, Administrator Coordinator – ADA, City of Houston, Human Resources Department, Civil Service & EEO Division
Present	Legal: Rebekah Wendt

MOPD Staff:

Present	Nick Arcos
Present	Amanda Boyd
Present	Alex Chau
Present	Luis Moreno
Present	Angel Ponce-Trevizo

Multiservice Center Staff:

Present	Charles French
Absent	Hannah Walker

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Edmonds motioned postponing the approval of the June 2021 minutes until next month's meeting. Commissioner Williams seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

Public Comments

- There were no public comments.

Affordable Homes Campaign – presentation led by Megan Rowe, Fair Housing Analyst, Planning and Grants Management, Housing and Community Development Department. Megan shared information about the Fair Housing Act, what it prohibits, how to report housing discrimination, and available resources.

- Questions by Commissioners Harris and Garcia Cantu were asked and answered.

Office of Policing Reform and Accountability – presentation led by Crystal Okorafor, Deputy Inspector General, Office of Policing Reform and Accountability

- The mayor created the task force after George Floyd's murder.
- They recently launched the City of Houston Police Transparency Hub on June 1st. More information available here - [Press Releases \(houstontx.gov\)](https://www.houstontx.gov/press-releases)
- Ms. Okorafor reviewed the various features of the webpage and the dashboard with the commission.
- Questions by Commissioners Harris and Petty were asked and answered.

MMSC Report to the HCOD - Chuck French, Administration Manager, Houston Parks and Recreation Department

- The MMSC is operational at 100% capacity as of July 1.
- Temperature check upon arrivals and wristbands distributed once screened; masks are optional.
- Number of attendees has continued to increase. On average its up about 10% more each week.
- Dr. Michael Cottingham, Alyson Galanga, and Joy Cabador have worked on a research project measuring the impact of the facility (MMSC) on participants' physical and mental health throughout the pandemic.
- Findings included information about the barriers, benefits, and methodology used in this research study.
- These outcomes confirm that the center is a centralized point, it means community, and provides quality of life improvement.
- Chair Aguillard, Commissioner Edmonds, and MOPD Director Gabe Cazares made comments.
- Questions by Commissioner Harris were asked and answered.

MOPD Report to the HCOD - Gabe Cazares, Director, Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, Angel Ponce, Senior Community Engagement Liaison, Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities

- MOPD has been busy last month getting ready for the Disability Unity and Pride. Pencil July 29 and 30 on your calendar for this virtual celebration.
- MOPD Director Gabe Cazares presented at a conference about transportation technology and infrastructure to make the case for public sidewalks. They'll be sharing this talk with community and civic club meetings to help homeowners understand the accessible pedestrian routes of travel.
- 50 pedestrian accessibility reviews (PARs) were completed in 2020. So far 63 PARs have been completed this year and exceeded the total for last year.
- This month will see more prep work for the ADA anniversary celebration and for the new MOPD office space on Walker.
- MOPD is also currently working with their partner, Houston Public Works, on the Accessible Houston Initiative. The last time it was updated was in 1994.

- Gabe introduced the interns working with MOPD this summer – Claire Noel, Cecilia Martinez, Nhi Tran, Madison Harper, and Aidan Coffey.

Committee Updates

- a. Community Access, Transit, and Housing - Tina Williams, Chair
 - No update at this time.
 - b. Emergency Preparedness, Response, and First Responder Training - Ricky Harris, Chair
 - No update at this time other than a reminder to keep an eye on news about the weather.
 - c. Employment and Transition to Employment - Meredith Silcox, Chair
 - The committee is planning to launch a Disability Employment Awareness Campaign for October.
 - d. Education - Mark Potts and Ana Calvo, Co-Chairs
 - The committee is currently working on a couple initiatives.
 - e. Immigration and Refugee Services - Ismael Garcia Cantu, Chair
 - Commissioner Garcia Cantu provided an update.
 - f. Planning, Membership, and Community Engagement - Annie Bacon and Eileen Edmonds, Co-Chairs
 - 22 days away from the 2-day event celebrating disability unity and pride hosted by the Houston Center Independent Living. Thank you to Maria Palacios for her creative direction and leadership. The event is July 29 & 30 @ 6:30 PM.
- II. ADA Update - Marshall Watson, Administrative Coordinator – ADA, City of Houston, Human Resources Department, Civil Service & EEO Division
- Marshall Watson shared an update on the 16 calls in the ADA call log this last month. The total claims for 2021 is 51.
 - There were 53 requests for reasonable accommodations in the last quarter. 122 requests so far this year; on track to outpace last year as 128 requests were made in 2020.

Commissioners Comments

- Commissioner Harris asked when the HCOD would begin to meet again in person. Gabe Cazares said we are looking into when we can do so, but while continuing accessibility via a virtual platform. Commissioner Petty shared his thoughts as well.
- Commissioner Freeman-Smith requested the commission receive the presentation slides as they were very informative.

Adjourn

The HCOD meeting adjourned at 5:28 pm.

Motion to adjourn: Commissioner Eileen Edmonds

Seconded: Commissioner Ismael Garcia Cantu

Minutes submitted by Eileen Edmonds (eileen@tuts.com, 281.797.3796).
Please submit any corrections to Eileen Edmonds.