

Approved May 17, 2012

Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD)

Minutes for Thursday, April 12, 2012

51 Inman Street, 2nd Floor Conference Room, Cambridge, MA 02139

Meeting was called to order at 5:43pm

Present:

Members: Elizabeth Dean-Clover, Miriam Cooper, Sandy Durmaskin, JoAnn Haas, Eileen Keegan Bongiorno, Alissa Land, Bet MacArthur, Naomi Pinson, Rachel Tanenhaus, and Dave Wood.

Alternates: Don Summerfield

Staff: Michael Muehe and Kate Thurman

Absent: Kathy Watkins.

Guests: Superintendent Chris Burke, Police Department; John Kelly, Second Thoughts; and Kara McSweeney, Department of Public Works.

Documents Used:

- March 7, 2012 Memorandum from Wayne Amaral, Manager of Traffic Operations and Engineering, to Michael Muehe regarding prohibiting bicycle parking to disability/handicap parking sign poles proposal
- Information on Second Thoughts (www.second-thoughts.org)
- October 4, 2011 LETTERS TO THE EDITOR | DEBATE OVER ASSISTED SUICIDE (http://articles.boston.com/2011-10-04/bostonglobe/30243525_1_suicide-doctor-ballot-initiative)
- On-going Sidewalk and Roadway Work 5 year plan street list (<http://www.cambridgema.gov/TheWorks/departments/engnr/fiveyearplan.aspx>)

Minutes: A motion to approve the March 8, 2012 minutes was seconded and passed.

Public Works Update: Kara McSweeney reported for Kathy Watkins. She gave a brief overview of the on-going Sidewalk and Roadway Work of the Five-Year Plan. She reported that miscellaneous sidewalk and ramp work got started early this year because of the mild winter.

Michael Muehe said that he has been working with the Traffic, Parking & Transportation Department on Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS). He asked those in attendance to email him (mmuehe@cambridgema.gov) and Kate Thurman (kthurman@cambridgema.gov) with a list of locations where they have any concerns about APS, curb ramps, etc.

Police Community Liaison Update: Superintendent Chris Burke reported on enforcement of banning parking in bus stops. He said that there are 293 MBTA bus stops in Cambridge and that 1,1454 tickets were issued in 2011 for bus stop parking violations, and that 314 tickets have been issued so far this year. He encouraged people to call the non-emergency police number (617-349-3300) to report vehicles parked illegally in bus stops.

Chair's Report: Elizabeth Dean-Clover reminded members that the May meeting has been moved to May 17.

Nominations for Officer Positions:

Rachel Tanenhaus nominated Elizabeth Dean-Clover for Chair and Sandy Durmaskin seconded the nomination.

Alissa Land nominated Naomi Pinson for Chair, and Dave Wood seconded, but Ms. Pinson respectfully declined the nomination.

Sandy Durmaskin nominated JoAnn Haas for Secretary, and Eileen Keegan Bongiorno seconded.

Bet MacArthur nominated Alissa Land for Secretary, but Ms. Land respectfully declined the nomination.

Alissa Land nominated Sandy Durmaskin for Secretary, but Ms. Durmaskin respectfully declined the nomination.

There will be another opportunity for Commission members to make nominations at the May 17 meeting, after which elections will be held.

Other updates:

Elizabeth Dean-Clover reported that the MBTA passed a revised fair increase, which will go into effect on July 1, 2012. The plan is limited to one year, after which it will be reexamined.

Ms. Dean-Clover discussed the need to form a sub-committee for planning the annual October Employment event. Ms. Pinson expressed concern that people with hidden disabilities, and especially mental disabilities, were not included in last year's event.

Ms. Dean-Clover, Naomi Pinson, Alissa Land, JoAnn Haas, and Michael Muehe volunteered to be on the planning sub-committee.

Ms. Dean-Clover reported receiving a proposal from the Cambridge Community Center for a mini-grant from the National Organization on Disability award money that the City won in 2006 that would be used for making their Howard Street entrance accessible. This is the location where the new Winter Farmers' Market is held and they will also be hosting part of the Cambridge Open Studios in May. Ms. Dean-Clover reported giving approval on the Commission's behalf to provide the grant.

Members requested from staff a list of the National Organization on Disability award money mini-grant recipients.

The board will discuss at the next meeting which summer month to take off.

Executive Director's Report: Michael Muehe introduced guest speaker John Kelly, Founder of Second Thoughts, which is a group of disability rights activists opposing the legalization of assisted suicide. Mr. Kelly stepped down as Chair of the Boston Commission for Persons with Disabilities to focus his time on Second Thoughts. [Editor's note: see www.second-thoughts.org for more information]

Mr. Kelly said that a bill to legalize assisted suicide will be on the Massachusetts ballot this November and that the bill is modeled explicitly on the Oregon law, which has been in effect for about 15 years. Proponents of the bill describe it as a benefit for persons with disabilities (PWD), but Mr. Kelly said that Oregon Medicaid denied life-extending treatment for two individuals, stating in the denial notices to the patients that they would not cover the treatment, but would cover the cost of assisted suicide.

Mr. Kelly said that the bill isn't necessary because any adult has the right to refuse any and all treatment, and because suicide is not illegal. He said that the self-determination is taken from PWD when assisted suicide is legalized. He also said that abuse and misdiagnosis are always of concern. For example, the law does not prohibit heirs from administering the lethal dose of medication.

Mr. Kelly also explained that doctors are normally held to a standard of negligence, but in the assisted suicide legislation, that standard is reduced to good faith, meaning that as long as medical providers claim to have acted in good faith, they are not liable. He also noted that the law requires that the medical examiner write on the death certificate that the person died of the underlying terminal illness rather than by assisted suicide.

Michael Muehe asked members to email him if interested in working on this issue.

A motion to table further discussion on assisted suicide was seconded and passed.

Mr. Muehe said that CCPD has an appointment with Cambridge Community Television (CCTV) to record a PSA on Monday, May 7 at 4:30pm and that pro bono association Joanna Berton Martinez has agreed to be the producer. He said that volunteers are needed for writing the 30 second script, delivering the PSA on camera, and for help out behind the scenes. There will be a meeting on Monday, April 30 to work out the details.

Mr. Muehe reported that WGBH's National Center for Accessible Media will be conducting an audit of the City website over the next few months.

Michael Muehe announced that there will be two Massachusetts Architectural Access Board hearings on June 25, 2012 to discuss two variance applications.

Update on Sidewalk Obstruction Issues:

JoAnn Haas said that the bicycle regulations have been updated to clarify that locking bikes to street poles designating disability parking spaces is prohibited. The changes will be published in the newspaper for the next 2-3 weeks. She asked people to email her if interested in working on a PSA regarding the new regulation.

Mr. Muehe said that once the revised regulation becomes official he will ask the City's Public Information Officer (PIO) to send out a PIO update with the information.

Disability Reframed: Bet MacArthur said that she will be meeting with Michael Muehe to discuss restarting the film series. She also said that the Boston Commission for Persons with Disabilities has expressed an interest in collaborating on the film series.

Project Coordinator's Report: Kate Thurman will apply to the Arts Council for a community table for CCPD at River Festival, which is on Saturday, June 2 this year. As usual, several volunteers will be needed to staff the table from noon to 6pm.

Public Input: There was no public input.

Meeting adjourned at 7:35pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kate Thurman, Disability Project Coordinator