

Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities

Minutes for Thursday, February 11, 2010

Present:

Members: Laura Brelsford, JoAnn Haas, Eileen Keegan Bongiorno, Kate Patton Regal, Gordon Slater, Don Summerfield, Rachel Tanenhaus, and Dave Wood.

Alternates: Bet MacArthur.

Staff: Michael Muehe, and Kate Thurman.

Absent: Kathy Watkins (DPW).

Guests: Elizabeth Dean Clower, Cambridge Resident; Alissa Land, Cambridge Resident; Ben Harris, Cambridge Resident; and Peter Montalto, Cambridge Family and Children's Service.

January Minutes – On behalf of David Peterson, Kate Thurman requested his name be removed from the “Present” section, as he was not present at the January meeting. The minutes were approved as amended.

Snow Update – JoAnn Haas reported that she has been in touch with the Cambridge Postmaster, as well as the representatives from the Cambridge Neighborhood Associations regarding the “Adopt-a-Sidewalk” and “Adopt-a-Corner” initiatives. She read a letter from Katherine E. Lydon, Cambridge Postmaster inviting members of the Commission to attend a meeting in the Sullivan Chamber at City Hall on February 23 regarding their “Adopt-a-Box” program, which requests that residents and business owners keep Postal boxes clear of snow and other obstructions, as well as report any vandalism.

Don Summerfield said that he may be able to attend the meeting.

Michael Muehe reported that the Cambridge Consumer Council is also involved in coordinating the “Adopt-a-Box” program.

JoAnn Haas said that the Cambridge Post Office is also holding a “Best Block” contest for clearing snow, which is slated to end in March. She also said that she has emailed the Neighborhood Associations to promote their “Adopt-a-Box” program.

Dave Wood asked if the Commission should be focusing on access to the boxes, rather than vandalism or the appearance of them in our communications with the Neighborhood Associations. It was decided that we will promote the program as it is, but emphasize the importance of accessibility.

Michael Muehe thanked JoAnn for her keeping the Neighborhood Associations informed of our work. He also reported that he received an email from a resident expressing concern about the Snow Hotline number being omitted by the Department of Public Works (DPW) in their most recent notice to residents. She also asked if the DPW could take the responsibility of clearing curb cuts on both sides of the crosswalks on the perimeter of City-owned buildings. Michael spoke with DPW and reported that the snow hotline, which is a voicemail system, was not published because its voicemail box did not always have enough capacity to record all the messages during, for example, a weekend snowstorm. However, they are now using a digital system, which can record an unlimited amount of messages, and will include the number in future publications. Michael said that DPW is not able to make a commitment of shoveling all curb cuts across the street from public property, but that they are willing to work with the CCPD to map out the most important ones.

Don Summerfield asked about DPW's policy on clearing snow at the Carl Barron Plaza, stating that it is often a problem. Michael Muehe said that the business owners are responsible for clearing the sidewalk immediately adjacent to them if DPW does not clear them. He will raise the issue at the next CCPD meeting when Kathy Watkins from DPW is present. Michael also suggested inviting Becky Fuentes, the Assistant Commissioner for Administration at DPW, to the April or May meeting for a recap of the winter snow clearance and to express any concerns we may have.

Chair's Report – Rachel Tannenhaus reported that she is convening a sub-committee to interview applicants to fill the Commission vacancies and will move that process along as quickly as possible.

Public Works Report – Michael Muehe reported that Kathy Watkins was unable to attend the meeting, but that the Concord Avenue project, which involves the repaving of both the street and sidewalks west of Alewife Brook Parkway, is going out to bid this spring.

Disability Reframed Community Film Series Update – Bet MacArthur reported that the next film, *The Soloist*, will be shown on Saturday, February 20 at the Citywide Senior Center. Jens Rybo, the Artistic Director of Tunefoolerly, will be the guest speaker.

Executive Director's Report – Michael Muehe reported that he attended a hearing on proposed changes to the Taxicab School, which was held by the Cambridge License Commission. He thanked Miriam Cooper, a Cambridge Resident, who also attended to raise concerns about educating drivers about the rights of people with disabilities who have service dogs.

Michael thanked JoAnn Haas for her article on snow and ice issues that was published in the February/March AccessLetter. He requested that articles for the next edition need to be submitted by March 15.

He reported that a hearing regarding accessibility at the Paradise Club on Massachusetts Avenue is being held on April 5 by the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAB).

Michael thanked volunteers Ann Connolly for helping to update our MAAB communications log and Maureen Coyne for assisting with mailings.

He also reported that Cambridge Community Television (CCTV) has requested that we attend a hearing to express our support for continued funding.

Michael reminded Commission Members to complete the Conflict of Interest Law Online Training Program and provide him with a printed receipt of having taken it. This is required by the Commonwealth and City Manager's Office.

Disability Project Coordinator's Report – Kate Thurman reported receiving fewer complaints about snow and ice removal. She also reminded Commission Members to let her know if they are interested in working with their clergy people to improve accessibility at houses of worship.

New Business – The idea of including a Q&A column in the AccessLetter, with questions being submitted by members of the community, was discussed. Rachel Tanenhaus will add it to next month's agenda for further discussion.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:04 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kate Thurman, Disability Project Coordinator