

## **Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD)**

Minutes for Thursday, June 10, 2010

### **Present:**

Members: Larry Braman, JoAnn Haas, Kate Patton Regal, Don Summerfield, Rachel Tanenhaus; Kathy Watkins (DPW), and Dave Wood.

Staff: Michael Muehe and Kate Thurman

Absent: Laura Brelsford, Eileen Keegan Bongiorno, and Gordon Slater.

Guests: Miriam Cooper, Cambridge Resident; Stephen Dramond, Cambridge Resident; Cindy Grimes, Cambridge Resident; George Kelso, Cambridge Resident; Alissa Land, Cambridge Resident; Fred Meyer, Cambridge Resident; Peter Montalto, Cambridge Family and Children's Service; John Ritz, Lincoln Disability Commission; and Marty Weinstock, Cambridge Resident.

**May Minutes:** on behalf of Sandy Durmaskin, Kate Thurman requested that the minutes be changed to read (changes are in bold):

Sandy Durmaskin reported that bill 1965, An Act Relative to Provide Funds for ADA Compliance in Cities and Towns (see attachment), was introduced and will specify what disability commissions can do with money that comes in from disability parking violations. The bill would require that two members of the commission volunteer on a committee that would engage in self-evaluation and is seen as a threat to the autonomy of commissions. She said that the **Disability Policy Consortium** is very concerned about it. She also said that a bill to exempt group homes from access requirements has been proposed.

And:

**It was** also announced that a bill to exempt group homes from access requirements has been proposed. This would violate the Federal Fair Housing Act.

A motion to approve the minutes as amended was passed by the Commission.

**Announcements:** Rachel Tanenhaus reported that the Access to Healthcare Conference, which is sponsored by the Disability Policy Consortium, Disability Law Center, and the Center for Living and Working, will be held on June 22, 2010 in

Shrewsbury. She said that the conference is geared toward providers and facility managers, and that advocates are welcome to attend, as well. She said that the registration deadline is Monday, June 14.

Ms. Tanenhaus also announced that the CCPD will not be meeting in the month of July.

**Chair's Report:** Rachel Tanenhaus reported that a group of Guide Dog users will be meeting on June 11, 2010 to work on plans for field investigations regarding taxicab accessibility. She said that they will be working with the Cambridge License Commission's Hackney Division and with the Cambridge Police Department to ensure compliance. Ms. Tanenhaus thanked both the License Commission and the Police Department for working in conjunction with CCPD on conducting this investigation.

Ms. Tanenhaus also stated that the Commission will need to hold elections for the positions of Chair and Secretary. She said that she, CCPD's current Chair, and Dave Wood, the current Secretary, have each served for one year.

She also reported that she will send the CCPD's recommendations for candidates who applied for the board vacancies to the City Manager. Once the City Manager approves, candidates will be notified.

Ms. Tanenhaus took a moment to welcome back Don Summerfield, who is recovering from an injury.

**Elections:** Commission members motioned to open nominations for the position of Chair. The motion was approved, followed by a nomination of Rachel Tanenhaus for Chair of the Commission. As there were no other nominations, a motion to close nominations was made and passed. An election was held, followed by a motion to appoint Ms. Tanenhaus to serve as Chair for another year. The motion was approved, and Ms. Tanenhaus was appointed as the Commission's Chair for a period of one year.

Commission members then motioned to open nominations for the position of Secretary. The motion was passed, followed by the nomination of Dave Wood for Secretary of the Commission. As there were no other nominations, a motion to close nominations was made and passed. An election was held, followed by a motion to appoint Mr. Wood to serve as Secretary for a period of one year. The motion was passed, and Mr. Wood was appointed as the Commission's Secretary for a period of one year.

**Update on Sidewalk Obstruction Issues:** JoAnn Haas reported sending an email to the neighborhood associations, thanking them for their help in keeping the sidewalks clear during the winter, and mentioned that CCPD is working on keeping the sidewalks clear from all obstructions year-round.

Stephen Dramond, Chair of the Agassiz Neighborhood Council, said that he would like to provide input to the City and DPW in the planning of sidewalk improvements along Massachusetts Avenue between the Cambridge Common and Porter Square.

Fred Meyer, Treasurer of Agassiz Baldwin Community, reported sending a letter to the City Manager requesting an estimate on what it would cost the for the City to plow all sidewalks, as well as how much of a property tax increase would result.

Kathy Watkins reported that DPW is working on compiling the necessary statistics, although she is not aware the current status of this project.

Mr. Meyer also reported that residents pay about one-third of the cost to run the City, with businesses paying two-thirds. He would like for CCPD to consider endorsing their proposal for DPW taking responsibility for shoveling all sidewalks.

JoAnn Haas said that she can put Mr. Meyer in touch with Kathy Lydon, the Cambridge Postmaster, because their letter carriers use the sidewalks every day.

Mr. Dramond added that Cambridge Community Television produced a film depicting the difficulty that wheelchair users encounter when there is snow and ice on the sidewalks.

Michael Muehe suggested that the Commission add an agenda item regarding snow and ice issues to the September meeting.

**Public Works:** Kathy Watkins provided an overview of DPW's five year plan and reported that they would like to focus on all users of sidewalks and streets, including drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians. They are also planning on coordinating construction with other groups, such as cable companies, so any updates or improvements can be incorporated into each project.

Ms. Watkins reported that she has been working closely with Michael Muehe to determine high-priority areas and meet the needs of the disability community.

She also reported that the City's budget for the Miscellaneous Sidewalk Program is typically between \$400,000 and \$450,000 and will be set by City Council for the upcoming 2011 fiscal year.

Ms. Watkins said the sidewalk materials will consist of concrete and wire-cut brick with no beveled surfaces. She also said that DPW is trying out cast iron detectable warning panels; Vermont has found these panels to be more durable than the plastic or rubber-type panels, which seem more susceptible to sloughing off their truncated domes in the winter.

There was a question about botanical obstructions on sidewalks, after which Ms. Watkins said that residents may call DPW at 617-349-4800 and request that the City Arborist trim branches of City trees if they are hanging too low over the sidewalks.

**Disability Reframed Film Series:** Michael Muehe announced that the Film Series planning committee will be meeting in the CCPD office on Tuesday, June 15 at 10:00AM to discuss plans for the next film.

Kate Thurman reported that Saturday's screening of *Luckey* went very well, with the film's director, Laura Longworth, present to lead the discussion.

**Executive Director's Report:** Michael Muehe welcomed guests and members of other disability commissions, and also welcomed Don Summerfield's return following an April injury.

Mr. Muehe reported that the Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD) began reconstructing the Walden Street Bridge in 2008, and that, upon completion, some of the sidewalk slopes, which were already too steep, were made even more so. He also reported that Cambridge has been unable to get the MHD to do anything to correct the inaccessibility. Mr. Muehe said that the MHD had constructed a temporary accessible pedestrian bridge, but that it was torn down following completion of the new bridge. He reported that Don Summerfield, a CCPD member, has filed a complaint with the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAB) and that MHD has applied for a variance, in which they claim that it will cost 20 million dollars to create an accessible route, in part because it would require purchasing private property. Mr. Muehe asked the Commission to consider passing a motion to formally oppose this variance.

Don Summerfield motioned to oppose, which was seconded and passed by the Commission. Kathy Watkins abstained.

Mr. Muehe said that a Celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act will be held on Monday, July 26 at 12pm on then Boston Common at the corner of Beacon and Charles. He said that people may call the Institute for Human Centered Design with questions or to ask about volunteering.

He said that the June/July issue of the AccessLetter has gone out, and thanked Emily Kane for her article. Mr. Muehe reported that the copy deadline for the

August/September issue is July 15, 2010 and asked that people let him know if they are interested in writing a story on a disability-related topic.

He also reported that a new intern, Nate Finch, will work in the CCPD office this summer, doing ADA Title III accessibility work.

**Project Coordinator's Report:** Kate Thurman thanked Emily Kane for her help with the AccessLetter and film series. She also reported that the Cambridge Prevention Coalition will be holding a prescription drop off event, allowing Cambridge residents to discard medications they no longer need.

She mentioned that the CCPD is interested in updating the format of the AccessLetter and that she and Michael Muehe would like help identifying a graphic artist who may be interested in offering *pro bono* assistance in creating a new template.

**Public Input:** Fred Meyer reported that the audible pedestrian signals in Harvard Square can be heard in old, poorly insulated buildings

George Kelso reported that the group Walk Boston is interested in raised crosswalks rather than pedestrian flyover bridges. Michael Muehe said that pedestrian bridges are helpful for crossing very busy roadways, noting that there must be 12 feet of ramp for every one foot in height, with level landings every 30 feet.

Mr. Muehe also said that Cambridge has a Traffic Calming Program, which is run by the Community Development Department, with input from CCPD, the Department of Public Works, and the Department of Traffic, Parking and Transportation (TPT). The program implements ways to slow traffic at busy intersections, including raised crosswalks and curb extensions.

Kathy Watkins said that a lot of pedestrians cross intersections before the lights change. She said that the traffic calming program has also found that pedestrians still cross at street level where pedestrian overpasses exist, so there is a concern about how many pedestrians will actually use the bridges rather than using raised crosswalks.

Rachel Tanenhaus said that the audible street crossing signals sometimes drown out the noise of turning cars, noting that four-way pedestrian crossings are very helpful.

Miriam Cooper reported having trouble crossing Massachusetts Avenue at Porter Square during peak times due to cars blocking intersections. Kathy Watkins said that she will report this issue to TPT, as it may be a signal timing problem.

Marty Weinstock reported that a lot of taxi drivers in Cambridge do not want to accept the taxi coupons. Michael Muehe requested that he and others report any problems with cab drivers accepting the coupons to the CCPD, providing the medallion number, date and time. Mr. Muehe said that the CCPD will notify the Cambridge License Commission, which takes this matter very seriously. He also noted that drivers get the full cash value of the coupons when they turn the coupons in to their radio service.

**New Business:** Rachel Tanenhaus reminded people that the Commission will not be meeting in July and that the CCPD's October Employment Program is approaching, stating that a sub-committee will be needed to work on the planning. There was a request that a list of standing or current sub-committees be provided at the next meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 7:27pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Kate Thurman, Disability Project Coordinator