

Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD)

Minutes for Thursday, September 16, 2010

Present:

Members: Elizabeth Dean-Clower, JoAnn Haas, Eileen Keegan Bongiorno, Alissa Land, Don Summerfield, Rachel Tanenhaus, and Kathy Watkins.

Staff: Michael Muehe and Kate Thurman

Absent: Laura Brelsford, Sandy Durmaskin, Kate Patton Regal, Gordon Slater, and Dave Wood.

Guests: John Nardone, Department of Public Works; Lisa Peterson, Department of Public Works; Kathy Podgers, Cambridge resident; and Trouble, Somerville resident.

Minutes:

A motion to approve the August 12, 2010 minutes was passed by the Commission.

Announcements: Don Summerfield said that he attended the first in a series of three public meetings on the shared use of Fresh Pond. He said that disability issues will probably be discussed at the second meeting.

Mr. Summerfield also reported attending the Accessible Transportation Forum sponsored by the Disability Law Center and the Institute for Human Centered Design, where Richard Devylder, Senior Advisor for Accessible Transportation in the Obama Administration, gave a very valuable presentation.

Kate Thurman announced that she will be participating as a walker in the 5K4Life Road Race on Sunday, October 4, 2010. She said the race is a fundraiser for ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease) research, and invited others to join her.

Rachel Tanenhaus reported that she and Bet MacArthur will be doing a presentation on the parallels and experiences between the disability community and the trans community at the Transcending Boundaries Conference, which is being held in Worcester from November 19-21, 2010. She said Transcending Boundaries is a conference for people whose gender or sexuality does not fit well within the traditional binary system. She also said that Lee Harrington, a gender and sexuality activist, will be the keynote speaker, and that the theme of the conference is interconnections. They are hoping to have a disability presence there, and Ms. Tanenhaus invited people to speak with her if interested.

Chair's Report: Rachel Tanenhaus reminded those in attendance that the November CCPD meeting will be held on the third Thursday, November 18th, because the Veteran's Day holiday falls on the 11th.

Ms. Tanenhaus also announced that the CCPD's annual National Disability Employment Awareness Month event will be held on October 19, 2010. She said that she and Kathy Gips of the Institute for Human Centered Design and New England ADA Center will be speaking about the 20th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and new ADA regulations. A copy of the draft flyer regarding the event was passed around, and Michael Muehe asked that members share the information with others to spread the word as much as possible.

The event will be held in City Hall Annex, 344 Broadway Avenue, Cambridge.

Public Works Update: Lisa Peterson, Commissioner of the Cambridge Department of Public Works (DPW), and John Nardone, Assistant Commissioner for Operations, attended the meeting to discuss snow and ice issues in preparation for the upcoming winter season.

Mr. Nardone reported on his research of what it would cost for the City to assume responsibility for clearing all Cambridge sidewalks of snow and ice. He said that there are 200 miles of sidewalks in Cambridge and that DPW is currently responsible for clearing 18 of those miles, which abut City facilities and parks, in addition to clearing the majority of bus stops. Using statistics from this past winter's snowstorms, Mr. Nardone estimated that it would require about 1,440 workers, including 120 supervisors, to clear sidewalk snow in compliance with the time frame of the City's snow ordinance. He said that they would need 140 pieces of equipment, requiring trained machinery operators.

Mr. Nardone explained that it would be very difficult to find that many people to come in just after a snowstorm, noting that it's hard sometimes to assemble the 45 workers to clear the existing 18 miles of sidewalk. Extrapolating from data gathered last in the last snow season, Mr. Nardone estimated that it would cost the City roughly \$750,000 for each snowstorm to clear all Cambridge sidewalks of snow. With an average of 23 snowstorms per year, Mr. Nardone estimated that it could cost up to \$17,000,000 for the City to clear all sidewalks on an annual basis.

Ms. Peterson reported on the enforcement of the City's snow ordinance, stating that they are putting a lot of effort into issuing violations. She said that 501 tickets were issued during the 2009/2010 snow season, but that just 48% were paid despite mailing three notices to property owners and scheduling hearings before a court magistrate.

Ms. Peterson said that the legislature recently passed the Green Ticket Law (M.G.L. Ch. 40U), giving cities and towns the ability to put liens on properties for people who have had multiple violations of the snow ordinance and have not paid their tickets. The City has been advocating for such legislation for a number of years. The new law also allows for cities and towns to have an internal appeals process, rather than requiring them to take violators to court. However, Ms. Peterson noted that because Chap. 40U was modeled after the Boston program, it was written with language and implementation requirements specific to Boston. Cambridge is currently

unable to comply logistically with Chap. 40U, but Ms. Peterson said that DPW remains committed to this issue and will continue their advocacy efforts.

Ms. Peterson also said that DPW clears snow and ice from disability parking spaces that are associated with public buildings, including the municipal lots, and that they have done outreach to have businesses be better aware about the need of keeping disability parking spaces cleared. She said that they are working with Michael Muehe to write a letter to businesses.

Disability reframed Film Series: In Bet MacArthur's absence, Rachel Tanenhaus reported that the September 11, 2010 screening of *My Left Foot* went very well. She said that the next two films will be documentaries.

Executive Director's Report: Michael Muehe reported that the elevator at 51 Inman Street in Cambridge, which houses CCPD's office, will be out of commission for at least six weeks beginning on Tuesday, September 21, 2010. He said that he will be temporarily moving his office to the 4th floor of City Hall Annex, 344 Broadway, and that Kate Thurman, Disability Project Coordinator, will remain in the 51 Inman St. office. Space will be available to meet with people with disabilities in the accessible, basement-level Fuel Assistance at 51 Inman St. office as needed. Mr. Muehe added that phone numbers for offices in the building will be posted by the house phone in the basement. He noted that his phone number will not be changing.

Mr. Muehe said that CCPD's October meeting will be held in the 4th floor conference room of City Hall Annex.

Mr. Muehe also reported that he has been working with the manager of the Kendall Square Food Court to resolve several complaints regarding accessibility. Specifically, the food court will be installing accessible dining tables and counters for food vendors. He said they are making good progress and that he expects the accessibility improvements to be completed by mid-October.

Mr. Muehe said that he is also working with City Sprouts, an organization that installs gardens at the 12 elementary schools, where they work with the students to maintain them. He has one garden left to visit and said that he is working with both City Sprouts and the schools to suggest ways to improve accessibility to the gardens.

He also reported that the CCPD has received five letters from Inman Square businesses in response to the 20 letters that were sent out on July 26, 2010.

Project Coordinator's Report: Kate Thurman said that she received a call from Tom Boudrow from the Verizon Center for Customers with Disabilities regarding the services they offer, such as free directory assistance and video relay customer service, for people with disabilities. In an

effort to reach out to people statewide, Mr. Boudrow offered to provide a presentation at a future CCPD meeting.

Public Input: Trouble, a Somerville resident, said that she organizes an events newsletter for events that are \$5 or less in the Boston area, and would like to know how identify and note accessible venues.

Trouble also said that she is connected to the bicycle culture in Boston and noted that most bikers are do not know that they are not supposed to park their bikes by disability parking space poles. She offered her help in raising awareness about the issue in the bike community, and will follow up with JoAnn Haas, Michael Muehe and Kate Thurman.

Kathy Podgers, a Cambridge resident, stated that she has experienced discrimination from local places of business for having a service animal, and that this is an ongoing issue for people with disabilities who use service animals.

Old Business: Rachel Tanenhaus reported that the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission is sponsoring a “My Life, My Health: Living with Chronic Conditions” group in the Cambridge area. She invited people to speak with her about it if interested.

New Business: Don Summerfield reported that a neighbor of his who has no vision and bilateral hearing loss was arrested in August for assault and battery for tapping the foot of an aide with his cane while trying to navigate around the lift of an SCM van. He said that the aide refused to move and called the police. Mr. Summerfield said that he will be testifying as a character witness at the hearing on September 27, 2010.

The meeting adjourned at 7:27pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Kate Thurman, Disability Project Coordinator