

Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD)

Minutes for Thursday, October 14, 2010

Present:

Members: Laura Brelsford, Elizabeth Dean-Clower, Sandy Durmaskin, JoAnn Haas, Eileen Keegan Bongiorno, Alissa Land, Don Summerfield, and Rachel Tanenhaus.

Staff: Michael Muehe and Kate Thurman

Absent: Kate Patton Regal, Gordon Slater, Kathy Watkins, and Dave Wood.

Guests: Miriam Cooper, Cambridge resident; and Kristen McCosh, Commissioner, Boston Commission for Persons with Disabilities.

Minutes:

A motion to approve the September 16, 2010 minutes was passed by the Commission.

Announcements:

Alissa Land announced that it was Obsessive Compulsive Disorder Awareness Week and that there will be a two hour presentation at 6:00pm on Saturday, October 16 at McLean Hospital in Belmont. The presentation may also be followed online at www.ocfoundation.org. This is a free event and there is no need to register.

Ms. Land also reported that there will be a free forum, "The big IDEA: Reflecting on 35 Years of Equal Access for Students with Disabilities," moderated by Chris Matthews of MSNBC at Harvard Law School on Monday, November 15.

Laura Brelsford announced that the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) will be holding a ribbon cutting event at Copley Square Station in Boston on October 29 to celebrate the completion of renovations making the station accessible to persons with disabilities for the first time in MBTA history.

Rachel Tanenhaus announced that she and Bet MacArthur are doing a presentation titled "Parallels and Intersections in Transgender and Disability Experience" at the Transcending Boundaries Conference in Worcester on Saturday, November 20 at 4:00pm. She also reported that she will be holding a separate presentation, "Do We Ever Get a Day Off from Advocacy?" at 9:30am on the same day. She said that more information may be found online at www.transcendingboundaries.org.

Chair's Report: Rachel Tanenhaus reminded those in attendance that the November CCPD meeting will be held on the third Thursday, November 18 due to Veterans' Day falling on the 11th.

Michael Muehe added that it will be a joint meeting with the Cambridge Pedestrian Committee and will be held in the 4th floor conference room of City Hall Annex, 344 Broadway. Topics to be discussed may include sidewalk repair, snow and ice issues, and bicycle parking.

Ms. Tanenhaus reported that Gary Talbot, Assistant General Manager for Systemwide Accessibility at the MBTA will be our guest speaker at the January 13th CCPD meeting.

She also reminded members that CCPD's Annual Disability Employment Awareness Month event will be held on Tuesday, October 19 from noon to 1:30pm.

Update on Sidewalk Obstruction Issues: JoAnn Haas reported that she sent an email out to neighborhood associations after speaking with John Nardone and Lisa Peterson of the Department of Public Works (DPW).

Ms. Haas said that she, Michael Muehe, Kate Thurman, and Trouble, a Somerville resident, met to discuss outreach to the bicycle community about keeping cyclists from locking their bikes to disability parking sign poles. She also said that Vinny Best, Compliance Officer for DPW, enforces the bicycle parking regulations.

Public Works: Michael Muehe reported for Kathy Watkins, who was unable to attend, that sidewalk work started this week and that Lindon and Plympton Streets are now under construction, followed by Dunster and JFK Streets in the spring.

Mr. Muehe said that an open house regarding the construction will be held at the Cambridge Trust Company at 3pm on Tuesday, October 19 in Harvard Square.

Disability Reframed Film Series: Bet MacArthur reported that "My Left Foot" was very well received, with Chris Hart of the Institute of Human Centered Design was the speaker. She said the next film, "Shooting Beauty," will be held on Saturday, November 13 at the Citywide Senior Center. She said that the film is a documentary about a young photographer who started teaching people with severe disabilities to be photographers. Tony Knight, one of the subjects in the film, will be the guest host.

Ms. MacArthur and Mr. Muehe asked people to help with promoting the film.

Kate Thurman thanked Ms. MacArthur for her hard work in securing a closed captioned copy of *Shooting Beauty*.

Executive Director's Report: Michael Muehe reported that the elevator reconstruction work in the Coffon Building at 51 Inman Street is on schedule and should be back in order by November 1, 2010.

Project Coordinator's Report: Kate Thurman said that she is compiling a list of events of interest to the disability community for the December/January issue of *AccessLetter* and asked that people forward any suggestions to her. She also said that CCPD would like to keep the "Q&A" section going and requested that members follow up with her on any recommendations for questions.

Public Input: Miriam Cooper reported that there was an incident in Vancouver, Canada in which a train closed its automated doors on a guide dog after its handler stepped into the train, and left the station. She said that guide dog did survive, but was severely injured and will be unable to work again.

Rachel Tanenhaus said that the safety of service dog teams is a big issue and needs to be addressed. She, Michael Muehe, and Laura Brelsford reported that the MBTA has done a lot of work to train its operators on such issues.

Bet MacArthur suggested that it may be helpful to do a public outreach campaign, as the public may not be aware of these types of issues.

Ms. Brelsford reported that the MBTA is planning a public awareness campaign regarding priority seating on buses and trains, and that they are looking for input from customers.

Kate Thurman noted that her service animal is trained to go under the seats so she is out of the way and is not at risk of being stepped on or trampled, but that a lot of the priority seats are located over the wheels with no open space below. In response, Ms. Brelsford reported that the MBTA is looking into designating additional seats as priority seating for persons with disabilities and will be sure this issue is taken into consideration.

New Business: Don Summerfield reported that the State House will host its Annual White Cane Awareness Day on Friday, October 15.

Ms. Tanenhaus reported that President Obama signed Rosa's Law on the day of the CCPD meeting, October 14, which will strike the word "mental retardation" out of all federal documents and replace with "intellectual disability." She said that Rosa is a

nine year old girl and that she and her older brother, Nick, worked very hard to make this happen.

Alissa Land reported that President Obama also signed into law the “21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act,” which mandates accessible communication and information technology.

Meeting adjourned at 6:45 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kate Thurman, Disability Project Coordinator