

Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD)

Minutes for Thursday, December 9, 2010

Present:

Members: Laura Brelsford, Elizabeth Dean-Clower, Sandy Durmaskin, JoAnn Haas, Alissa Land, Rachel Tanenhaus, and Dave Wood.

Alternates: Bet MacArthur and David Peterson.

Staff: Michael Muehe and Kate Thurman.

Absent: Eileen Keegan Bongiorno, Gordon Slater, Don Summerfield, and Kathy Watkins.

Guests: Kelly Downes, Cambridge Police Department; and Jason Schneiderman, Cambridge resident.

Minutes:

JoAnn Haas made a motion to amend the November 18, 2010 minutes to include the motion that was passed to ask the Department of Public Works (DPW) for an estimate as to what it would cost for the City to assume responsibility for shoveling all sidewalk corners.

The minutes were approved as amended.

Announcements:

Bet MacArthur reported that she and Rachel Tanenhaus did a presentation on the parallels between trans and disability issues at the Transcending Boundaries conference in November.

Ms. Tanenhaus announced that next year's Transcending Boundaries Conference will be held in Springfield and that there will be an ADA coordinator. More information can be found online at www.transcendingboundaries.org.

Kate Thurman announced that it was National School Inclusion Week. She passed around a flyer about the "I Am Norm" campaign, which aims to redefine normal and promote inclusion.

Michael Muehe added that the campaign is directed to educators of school-age children, to increase awareness about disabilities and inclusion.

Chair's Report: Rachel Tanenhaus reported that Kate Patton Regal has resigned from the Commission due to other obligations. She expressed her gratitude for Ms. Regal's contributions as a Commission member.

She also reported that Gary Talbot, Assistant General Manager for System-Wide Accessibility of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) will be speaking at the January 13, 2011 CCPD meeting.

Update on Sidewalk Obstruction Issues: JoAnn Haas spoke about the informational cartoon sketch that was created to reach out to the bicyclist community to raise awareness about the importance of not locking their bikes to the disability parking sign poles. She passed out flyers with a copy of the sketch and public service announcement (PSA) that was created. She said that Somerville artist, Marco Jimenez, donated his time in creating the cartoon and that Trouble, another Somerville resident, has been very helpful in the outreach effort. Ms. Haas said that she, Michael Muehe, Kate Thurman, and Trouble will meet to discuss a plan for distributing the flyer and PSA.

Michael Muehe reiterated that the Department of Traffic, Parking, and Transportation (TPT) controls the City's bicycle regulations. He said that TPT determined that the existing language in the regulations covers the prohibition of parking bicycles to the disability parking sign poles.

Ms. Haas reported that she will send out an email to all the neighborhood associations when the first snow forecast is announced, to remind them of the importance of shoveling.

She also reported drafting letters to the Department of Public Works (DPW) and the Treasury Department regarding the motion that was made at the November, 2011 meeting to ask DPW for an estimate as to what it would cost for the City to shovel all sidewalk corners, followed by an estimate from the Treasury Department asking how much property tax would increase to cover the cost.

Mr. Muehe said that DPW put a lot of effort into developing their estimate of the costs and logistics of shoveling all 200 miles of sidewalk in the City, and DPW determined that, in addition to costing many millions of dollars, the logistics of hiring and supervising 1,500 workers to shovel snow every time there's a storm would likely be prohibitive.

There was some discussion and concern among members about how the motion was made at the November meeting.

David Peterson suggested creating a pilot program in which a 10-block area could be used to test the idea of the City assuming responsibility for shoveling all sidewalks.

Because Kathy Watkins was unable to attend the meeting, a motion was made to table the discussion until a representative from DPW was present. The motion was seconded and approved.

Disability Reframed Film Series: Bet MacArthur reported that the next film will be held on January 8, 2011 and will be another documentary to be determined. She will convene a sub-committee meeting to discuss titles and logistics.

Michael Muehe reminded members that the film series has a Facebook page. There was some discussion about joining Twitter.

Executive Director's Report: Michael Muehe thanked Elizabeth Dean-Clower and Larry Braman for speaking to third and fourth graders at the Graham and Parks Alternative School about their experiences as persons with disabilities.

Mr. Muehe reported that each of the 12 elementary schools has an Inclusion Specialist, and that Deb Stewart is the Inclusion Specialist for Graham and Parks. He said that Ms. Stewart created the curriculum, which is available to all third and fourth grade classes in Cambridge, although Graham and Parks is currently the only school that is doing it consistently. He said that the CCPD has multiple copies of the curriculum, which comes with a whole kit including DVDs and other teaching aids. Mr. Muehe said that the curriculum is not mandatory, but that Ms. Stewart dovetailed it with the MCAS curriculum frameworks and that we continue to advocate for each of the schools to phase it into their curriculums.

He said that several current and past CCPD members have gone to the schools to speak with the students.

Mr. Muehe also congratulated Laura Brelsford on her promotion to Deputy Director for System-Wide Accessibility at the MBTA.

Project Coordinator's Report: Kate Thurman reported that she and Bet MacArthur conducted a thorough accessibility survey at First Parish Church in Cambridge. She said that the Church is very committed to making their building and programming accessible to persons with disabilities and that they discussed a wide range of accessibility concerns, from installing new assistive listening devices to removing pews to allow for wheelchair space.

Ms. MacArthur acknowledged both the Church's commitment, as well as the challenges of retrofitting a 230 year old building to ensure accessibility. She said that they installed an elevator several years ago. She also reported that Kate Ryan, a former CCPD intern, is the chair of their Access Committee.

Ms. Thurman thanked Ms. MacArthur for her time and efforts in setting up and conducting the survey of First Parish with her.

Meeting adjourned at 6:45 pm for the Holiday Party

Respectfully Submitted,
Kate Thurman, Disability Project Coordinator