

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

Minutes for Thursday, September 8, 2011

### **Present:**

Members: Elizabeth Dean-Clover, Sandy Durmaskin, JoAnn Haas, Eileen Keegan Bongiorno, Alissa Land, Naomi Pinson, Rachel Tanenhaus, Kathy Watkins, and Dave Wood.

Alternates: Don Summerfield

Staff: Michael Muehe and Kate Thurman

Absent: Miriam Cooper and Bet MacArthur

Guests: Perry Bronstein, Quincy COD; Kelly Downes, Cambridge Police Department; Lynette Forrey, Cambridge Resident; Tom Gilbert, Somerville Resident; and Kathy Podgers, Cambridge Resident.

### **Minutes:**

A motion to approve the July 14, 2011 minutes was passed by the Commission.

### **Announcements:**

Elizabeth Dean-Clover reminded those in attendance of the conference and expo Products & Technologies that Change People's Lives: Universal Design & Assistive Technology, which is being held on Monday, September 23. [Editor's note: see <[www.changepeopleslives.org](http://www.changepeopleslives.org)> for more information].

Michael Muehe said that a memorial service will be held for Fred Fay, an early pioneer of the disability rights movement, on Saturday, September 10 at 10:00am at Spaulding Hospital's Cambridge location.

**Chair's Report:** Elizabeth Dean-Clover asked members to provide advance notice to herself, Michael Muehe, and Kate Thurman if they will be unable to attend a CCPD meeting, particularly if they have items on the agenda.

Ms. Dean-Clover asked CCPD members to start thinking about what priority areas the Commission should focus on in the next year.

### **Annual October Disability Employment Awareness Month Event:**

Ms. Dean-Clover reported having a tentative speaker lined up and that the date of the event should be set soon, and will likely be in the second half of October.

Michael Muehe added that Christine Griffin, the new Assistant Secretary for Disability Policies and Programs in the MA Executive Office of Health and Human Services, will be the keynote speaker. Ms. Griffin is a former Equal Employment Opportunity Commissioner (EEOC), and was the Executive Director of the Disability Law Center in Boston prior to that. He said that he is waiting to hear back on her availability, but that she has committed to speaking.

Ms. Dean-Clower said that the event will be centered around communication issues in the workplace for people with disabilities, including both job applicants and employees. Potential sub-topics include disclosure, discrimination issues, and relationships between peers with and without disabilities. [Editor's note: the event, Communication Around the Workplace: Bridging Gaps Between People with Disabilities and Employers, will be held on Wednesday, October 19 from 6:00-8:00pm in the Lecture Hall of the Cambridge Public Library, 449 Broadway. Please see attached flyer for more information].

#### Action Items:

- CCPD members will consider areas of work to prioritize in the next year and report back at the next meeting, which is scheduled for October 13, 2011.
- CCPD members will provide advance notification to Elizabeth Dean-Clower, Michael Muehe, and Kate Thurman if they will be unable to attend a monthly meeting.

**Update on Sidewalk Obstruction Issues:** JoAnn Haas handed out copies of a letter dated August 26, 2011 sent via email by Elizabeth Dean-Clower to Sue Clippinger, Director of the Cambridge Traffic, Parking, and Transportation Department, regarding bicycle parking. Please see attached letter for more information.

Ms. Haas said that she will start sending copies of the "Look Up Before You Lock Up!" flyer to local bicycle shops to begin a public awareness campaign about the barrier to access for many people with disabilities that is created when bicycles are locked to designated disability parking signpoles. [Editor's note: please see attached copy of flyer].

Members discussed the possibility of additional signage on these poles to indicate that bicycle parking is prohibited, as the intent is to eventually have permanently affixed signage on all the disability poles.

The Commission passed a motion asking that Michael Muehe speak with Ms. Clippinger in their follow-up meeting about adding a simple strip to the disability parking poles stating "no bikes here", "no bike parking" or something similar.

JoAnn Haas also reported sending an email to the Cambridge Neighborhood Associations inviting them to a brown bag discussion in the Fourth Floor Conference Room of City Hall Annex, 344 Broadway, from 1:00-2:30pm on October 6 to discuss snow removal initiatives. [Editor's note: please see attached copy for more information].

Ms. Haas said that she is also planning on writing a letter to Governor Patrick about the possibility of getting some state funding to be used for clearing Cambridge sidewalks of snow and ice.

She reminded those in attendance to report potholes to DPW so they can be filled before the start of winter. [Editor's note: potholes and other street or sidewalk defects may be reported online at <[www.cambridgema.gov/theworks/ourservices/streetandsidewalkmaintenance/reportapothole.aspx](http://www.cambridgema.gov/theworks/ourservices/streetandsidewalkmaintenance/reportapothole.aspx)>, by emailing <[theworks@cambridgema.gov](mailto:theworks@cambridgema.gov)>, or by leaving a voicemail at 617-349-4854].

**Public Works:** Kathy Watkins handed out copies of last year's snow brochures and said that updates for this year will include adding the snow hotline phone number in addition to the web address for submitting complaints of unshoveled sidewalks, making the brochure less wordy and easier to read, and updating income eligibility guidelines for the snow exemption program for low-income seniors. Ms. Watkins asked people to contact her as soon as possible with any other suggestions for this year's brochures, which will be mailed to all residents before the start of the snow season.

Ms. Watkins also reported that DPW is working with the IT Department to develop an application that will allow users to report snow and ice issues from their smart phones.

**Cambridge Police Department:** Kelly Downes reported that there is nothing new to report on the issue of the barricade installed by the owner of the Fresh Pond Dunkin Donuts blocking his section of the parking lot from Trader Joe's. She said that the Fire Department has initiated a \$100 fine for each day that the barricade remains.

Elizabeth Dean-Clower and Sandy Durmaskin asked Ms. Downes about the possibility of the Cambridge Police Department to aid in the enforcement of restricted bicycle parking at disability parking spaces. Ms. Downes will check into this and report back to the Commission.

[Editor's note: Ms. Downes is no longer with the CPD. Superintendent Chris Burke will be acting as CCPD's liaison to the Police Department beginning in October].

**Community Access Update:** Sandy Durmaskin passed out copies of "Visitable Homes, Visitable Communities," a fact sheet developed by Concrete Change, an organization in Atlanta, GA that advocates for inclusive home design. [Editor's note: please see attached copy of fact sheet for more information].

The idea of visitability calls for each newly constructed home to have the following three features:

- At least one zero-step entrance

- A minimum 32 inches of clear space through all interior doorways
- At least a half-bath on the first floor

Ms. Durmaskin said that such requirements would allow many people with disabilities the ability to visit their neighbors, friends and family, and would benefit everybody. She proposed the idea of CCPD members making a formal recommendation to City Council that they consider instituting an ordinance so that visitability becomes a standard construction requirement for new homes in Cambridge.

Dave Wood wondered if such a recommendation would need to be more specific, requiring, for example, minimum dimensions for the half-bath.

Michael Muehe said that the idea is to construct homes that are minimally accessible, allowing persons with disabilities to gain access for visiting neighbors. He said that the Architectural Access Board's code of regulations only applies to certain structures and that single-family homes are exempt.

Naomi Pinson said that it is an issue of community inclusion, and that home construction that prevents access by person with mobility disabilities is a form of segregation.

Mr. Muehe said that several municipalities have passed visitability ordinances and that it is ultimately up to the legislative body to determine the scope of such ordinances.

Ms. Durmaskin added that the City has devoted considerable resources to aging in place initiatives and developing a long-term plan regarding aging in the community, and that a visitability ordinance would greatly enhance such planning.

A motion was passed that the Commission communicate with City Council that they consider a visitability ordinance for all new home construction in Cambridge.

Alissa Land suggested looking at sample legislation before approaching City Council.

Eileen Keegan Bongiorno added that City Council has strongly endorsed the Aging in Place Initiative and that it would be beneficial to include that as context.

### **Disability Reframed Film Series:**

In Bet MacArthur's absence, Elizabeth Dean-Clower reported that a film still needs to be chosen for screening on either September 24 or October 1<sup>st</sup>, and that the committee needs more volunteers to assist in preparations.

[Editor's note: this screening has been postponed and will likely be held in November or December].

**Executive Director's Report:** Michael Muehe reported visiting Danehy Park to look at new pathway extending from the Sherman Street parking lot to the picnic tables and accessible grills. The path was reconstructed following the erosion of the previous concrete pavers.

Mr. Muehe also said that Work Without Limits recently completed a practice brief on Cambridge In Motion, copies of which he handed out [see attached].

He said that the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAB) will be holding a hearing on October 26 at 2pm to consider the Cambridge YWCA's application for several variances from the access code.

He also said that the MAAB denied requests for variances by the new Harvard Square Starbucks and Faucett Street housing.

Mr. Muehe reported that the Art Institute of Boston is moving to Cambridge and is now part of Lesley University. The Church on Massachusetts Avenue next to the Cambridge Exchange Building will be moved several feet over to make room for new building to which it will connect, forming the Art Institute of Boston Complex. The church is currently inaccessible, but a new common, accessible entrance will be constructed joining the two buildings. The front entrance of the church is considered historically significant and will not be accessible.

He mentioned that there are two pending façade improvement projects, one for the new Curious George Bookstore, and the other for the Cambridge Center for Adult Education, both of which are located in Harvard Square.

Lastly, Mr. Muehe reported participating in interviews of candidates for a new Project Manager position at DPW to work with Kathy Watkins on various improvements around the City.

**Project Coordinator's Report:** Kate Thurman said that the renovation of the CCPD office has been completed and thanked Paul Lyle of DPW for coordinating the work and DPW staff who painted, patched walls, and replaced ceiling tiles before the new furniture was installed.

She also said that the MBTA will be holding meetings on Transportation for All with an opportunity for public comment and dialogue sessions. The Boston meeting will be held on November 7 from 3-5pm in Conference Rooms 1, 2, and 3 of 10 Park Plaza.

### **Public Input:**

Somerville resident Tom Gilbert said that the audible pedestrian signals at Mass Ave and Prospect Street in Central Square have still not been fixed following his complaint several months ago. He said that the cowbells sound almost identical, so it is impossible to distinguish between the crosswalk on Prospect Street and the crosswalk on Mass Ave, which is dangerous for people who are blind or partially sighted.

Michael Muehe said that he would speak with Jeff Parenti in the Department of Traffic, Parking, and Transportation about this issue.

**New Business:**

Rachel Tanenhaus reported that an accessibility “unconference” will be held to discuss accessibility issues in information technology on Saturday, September 17<sup>th</sup> and the Microsoft office at One Memorial Drive in Cambridge. She said that representatives from both Microsoft and Google will be there.

Ms. Tanenhaus also said that the next Transcending Boundaries Conference, a community conference celebrating the diversity of gender, sex, sexuality and relationships, will be held in Springfield near accessible bus and train stations the weekend of November 11-13. See <[www.transcendingboundaries.com](http://www.transcendingboundaries.com)> for more information.

Meeting adjourned at 7:20 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Kate Thurman, Disability Project Coordinator

**Attachments:**

- Communication Around the Workplace: Bridging Gaps Between People with Disabilities and Employers
- August 26, 2011 letter from Elizabeth Dean-Clover to Sue Clippinger regarding bicycle parking
- “Hey Cyclists! Look Up Before You Lock Up!” flyer
- September 5, 2011 invitation from JoAnn Haas to Cambridge Neighborhood Associations regarding sidewalk accessibility during the upcoming snow season.
- Fact Sheet: Visitable Homes, Visitable Communities
- Work Without Limits Practice Brief: Lessons Learned from Coordinated Transportation Series: Cambridge in Motion Team