

Amended and accepted March 8, 2012.

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

Minutes for Thursday, February 9, 2012

51 Inman Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room, Cambridge, MA 02139

Meeting was called to order at approximately 5:45pm

**Present:**

Members: Miriam Cooper, Elizabeth Dean-Clover, Sandy Durmaskin, JoAnn Haas, Eileen Keegan Bongiorno, Alissa Land, Naomi Pinson, and Rachel Tanenhaus.

Alternates: Laura Brelsford and Don Summerfield.

Staff: Michael Muehe and Kate Thurman.

Absent: Bet MacArthur, Kathy Watkins, and Dave Wood.

Guests: Superintendent Christopher Burke, Cambridge Police Department; Kara McSweeney, Department of Public Works; and Councillor Minka vanBeuzekom, Cambridge City Council.

**Documents Used:** January minutes; High Accident Location Data; MBTA Fare and Service Changes; Broadway Sidewalk Improvements; Draft letter to Governor Patrick.

**Minutes:** Ms. Dean-Clover asked that the January 12, 2012 minutes be amended so that the bullet point under "Healthcare Issues" in the Chair's report be deleted.

A motion to amend the January 12, 2012 minutes was passed by the Commission and was followed by a motion to accept the minutes as amended, which was also passed.

**MBTA Fare Changes:** Ms. Brelsford, CCPD Alternate and Deputy Director of the MBTA's Department of System-Wide Accessibility, provided a summary of the proposed MBTA fare changes. She reported that there are two proposals: one with significant fare increases and one with moderate fare increases, but significant service cuts. [Editor's note: detailed information on the proposed fare and service changes may be found online at [www.mbta.com/about\\_the\\_mbta/?id=23567](http://www.mbta.com/about_the_mbta/?id=23567)].

Ms. Brelsford said that the MBTA will be holding a public meeting in Cambridge from 6-8pm on Wednesday, February 29 to discuss proposed fare and service changes. [Editor's note: The meeting will be held in the Sullivan Chamber, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Avenue, near the Central Square MBTA Station].

Ms. Dean-Clover strongly encouraged people, and particularly those with disabilities, to attend this meeting. [Editor's note: if unable to attend one of the scheduled public meetings to provide feedback, individuals may submit comments electronically at <[www.mbta.com](http://www.mbta.com)>, by email to <[fareproposal@mbta.com](mailto:fareproposal@mbta.com)>, via U.S. mail to MBTA, Ten Park Plaza, Boston, MA 02116, Attn: Fare Proposal Committee, or by phone at 617-222-3200 (voice) or 617-222-5146 (TTY). Public comment period ends March 12, 2012].

Ms. Brelsford also said that Red Line trains will be transitioning to single employee operation, which is the national standard, at the end of March. If passengers with disabilities need assistance in boarding the

train (e.g., getting bridge plates, sighted guide, etc.), they may either ask an MBTA worker at the station or, if no staff available, use the call box on the platform to speak with an operator, who will relay the message to the operator of the next train, who will provide the needed assistance.

Several members expressed concern over the disproportionate fare hikes for individuals with disabilities who use The RIDE. It was noted that one of the proposals calls for a 500% fare increase for certain paratransit services.

Ms. Brelsford explained that the Americans with Disabilities Act requires public transit systems to provide free paratransit services to and from areas located within a ¾ mile radius of fixed rail services, and that the MBTA has been providing expanded services and that it is no longer able to provide non-mandated service at heavily discounted rates.

It was also noted that the application for The RIDE is changing to require an in-person assessment. Ms. Brelsford reported that the MBTA is one of the only major public transit systems to still accept a paper-only application.

Ms. Tanenhaus made a motion for the Commission to write a letter to the MBTA about the proposed fare changes and service cuts and how they disproportionately impact persons with disabilities. The motion was seconded and passed.

Ms. Tanenhaus, Ms. Cooper, Ms. Pinson and Ms. Durmaskin volunteered to work on writing the letter, and Ms. Dean-Clower and Ms. Haas volunteered to be editors.

**Police Community Liaison Update:** Superintendent Burke spoke about high accident areas involving cars, bicycles and/or pedestrians in Cambridge, noting the number one cause of accidents is people not following rules (e.g., texting while driving, not waiting for a cross signal, etc.).

Superintendent Burke also informed members that the Commission may use the Police Department's mobile electronic message board to display a message when available.

**Public Works Update:** Ms. McSweeney filled in for Ms. Watkins, reporting on sidewalk improvements on Broadway from Portland Street to Prospect Street. She said that current City policy is to replace like for like when reconstructing sidewalk surfaces (e.g., brick for brick, concrete for concrete), but that residents are given the option of paying the difference in cost to replace concrete sidewalks abutting their property with wire cut brick. However, DPW is encouraging residents to choose continuous concrete with a decorative brick band on the outside edge.

Ms. Durmaskin made a motion for the Commission to support the installation of continuous concrete sidewalks with brick edging along this segment of Broadway. The motion was seconded and passed.

Mr. Muehe noted that it is well-documented that people with disabilities tend to prefer the smooth surface that is offered by concrete over the rough surface provided by brick.

**Chair's Report:** Ms. Dean-Clower reported that Mary Thomas, Director of Harvard University Disability Services, will be attending the March meeting with a colleague to give a presentation.

Ms. Dean-Clower will provide an update at the March meeting on how the Commission will proceed with the Disability Reframed Community Film Series.

Ms. Dean-Clover also moved the May 10<sup>th</sup> meeting to May 17<sup>th</sup> because the Disability Law Center's Annual Gala will be held the evening of May 10.

**Update on Sidewalk Obstruction Issues:** Mr. Muehe said that he will send the draft Snow and Ice FAQ to the Department of Public Works, the Council on Aging, and the Department of Traffic, Parking, & Transportation (TPT) for their approval.

Ms. Haas reported that the bicycle parking regulations have not yet been changed and that Sue Clippinger of TPT had told her that it would be reasonable to expect the change to be made in March.

**Executive Director's Report:** Mr. Muehe said that Health Care for All will be holding roundtable discussions to get feedback on healthcare issues on Wednesday, February 22 and Tuesday, February 28 from 6-8pm in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room of 51 Inman Street. [Editor's note: due to limited space, RSVP is required to Harriotte Hurie at <hhurie@wesleyan.edu> or 617-306-1414].

Mr. Muehe also reported that the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAB) has been working on updating their accessibility regulations for the past few years, in part because of new ADA standards that go into effect on March 15, 2012. However, he said that there has been a group of people representing business interests trying to get the MAAB to adopt the International Building Code (IBC) rather than using the existing state code (521 CMR). Mr. Muehe reported drafting a letter to Governor Patrick with Ms. Dean-Clover to go on the record as wanting to keep the state code, which calls for stronger accessibility standards.

Members agreed to email Mr. Muehe within two weeks with any comments on the proposed letter.

A motion to send the letter as amended to Governor Patrick was seconded and passed.

**Project Coordinator's Report:** Ms. Thurman reported conducting a site visit with Mr. Muehe to the Quaker Friends Meeting House, which is looking to create a new, fully accessible entrance.

**Public Input:** Councillor vanBeuzekom introduced herself as the newest City Councilor. She reported attending various neighborhood association meetings and reaching out to all the Cambridge Commissions. Councilor vanBeuzekom said that she is amazed at how many people are volunteering their time and is learning how amazing Cambridge is.

**Old Business:** Ms. Haas, who was not present at the beginning of the meeting when the January minutes were discussed, said that her announcement in that meeting was not recorded properly. She will email Ms. Thurman with the correction.

Editor's Note: Ms. Haas sent the following information:

Two Bills in the Massachusetts House of Representatives, House Bills 1938 and 1944, would help students with disabilities. Bill 1938 expands the MCAS appeals process, and also would ensure that parents and students are informed of their right to appeal. House Bill 1944 permits students with disabilities, who fail the MCAS, to use other evidence of academic competence for the purpose of earning a high school diploma. The Massachusetts House of Representatives' Ways and Means Committee is currently considering both Bills. If interested in these bills, please contact your state representative and urge him/her to communicate his/her support of the Bills to the chair of the committee, Representative Brian S. Dempsey.

**New Business:** Ms. Keegan Bongiorno said that Cambridge Community Schools will be holding their 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Summer Resource/Camp Information Night on Thursday, March 1 from 6:30pm-8pm in the Main Cafeteria of the Cambridge Rindge and Latin High School, 459 Broadway. This is an opportunity for parents to get information on available summer resources and camps, including inclusive programs for kids with disabilities.

Meeting adjourned at 7:48pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Kate Thurman, Disability Project Coordinator