

Draft

Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities

Minutes for Thursday, March 11, 2021

Online via Zoom

Meeting was called to order at 5:30 pm

Present:

Members: Loring Brinckerhoff, Avril de Pagter, Mary Devlin, Gary Dmytryk, Jerry Friedman, Valerie Hammond, Jackie Jones, Philibert Kongtcheu, and Daniel Stubbs

Not Present: Stelios Gragoudas, Nicole Horton-Stimpson

Staff: Rachel Tanenhaus and Kate Thurman

Documents/Materials Used:

- Agenda
- Minutes from the February 11, 2021 Meeting

Minutes:

A motion to accept the February 11 minutes was seconded and unanimously passed.

Announcements:

Phil reached out to CCTV and is recording our meeting. CCTV is interested in getting recordings of our meetings to broadcast.

Rachel confirmed that Board members will be participating in a retreat to discuss possible future directions for the Board: Ora Grodsky will be facilitating. The probable date is Saturday, May 22, from 9:30 am-12:30 pm.

Chair's Report:

Phil reached out to Michael Stein of the Harvard Law School Project on Disability (HPOD), explaining to him that the Board is looking at updating the CCPD ordinance. Michael Stein will be speaking at the April 8 CCPD meeting about the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), but he also has expertise in putting together legal documents like laws, treaties, etc. He asked members to email him with any questions they would like him to address. Phil proposed that CCPD include the CRPD in our ordinance.

Phil and Gary met with Ellen Semonoff, Janice Alger, Kate, and Rachel last week to discuss the revision of the ordinance. It was a productive meeting. Any changes to the ordinance have to go through the office of the City Solicitor. Phil will be reaching out to Michael Stein for help with the framework of the ordinance. The Records subcommittee of the City Council updates bylaws and ordinances. Proposed changes go to City Council after receiving the City Solicitor's approval.

Discussion at the meeting also addressed fundraising. Phil has been advocating for raising funds to make adaptive sports more affordable to PwD. A lot of senior programming has been adapted by the city to make it remote, but nothing for PwD. This effort would emphasize article 30 of the CRPD.

The National Institute on Disability has a grant for solutions to isolation for PwD. Phil requests that we see if it would be appropriate for CCPD to apply. It is due in May.

Phil said that Ellen was very supportive around fundraising.

Jackie asked if the COVID relief bill has budget provisions for PwD. Rachel replied that she hadn't heard that it does from disability organizations, but it might be a good idea to see if there is anything specific for PwD.

Phil noted that the grant application is due May 7. for up to 500,000. Applying would require expertise in grant writing. Phil will share the link.

New Board Member Orientation is scheduled for Thursday, March 25. Phil asked that members look at the orientation documents to suggest updates.

Phil has created a Google Group for the Board that anybody can join by request. He created an e-mail that will go to all members.

He noted that Gary's second term is set to expire soon. Rachel said that she had spoken with Ellen, who said that until we onboard a new member, Gary may stay on as an active member. This is a really difficult time to be onboarding a new member, and for as long as Gary is an active member, he may run for and serve as secretary.

Discussion of Committees:

Youth and Education Committee: Loring, Jackie, Avril, Stel, Nicole
Phil said he is not as well-versed in youth and education.

Ellen Semonoff had suggested to Phil that it's very important to have a limited number of objectives for each committee.

Records committee: Mary, Dan
For looking at revisions to ordinance, by-laws, CCPD literature.

Outreach and Fundraising: (not listed explicitly, but presumably Phil, Gary, Valerie)

Committees will meet independently and come up with goals/ideas/priorities and present them to the Board at future CCPD meetings.

Phil reminded people that one can be a member of more than one committee. Avril noted that the google form did not allow people to select more than one, so Phil said that folks could just indicate verbally if they wanted to be on more than one committee.

Kate said that Ellen had suggested that the board put together a very well-defined proposal regarding fund-raising to submit to the City Manager and City Solicitor. Phil said he and Gary have spoken a lot about this and will have a proposal ready for our April meeting.

Discussion of Topics for Future Meetings:

Board member Show and Tell: Members have proposed lots of ideas for presentations on board members' areas of expertise. Several people have proposed items for May. Phil will sit down with Gary and come up with a possible schedule. Dan and Stel have already volunteered.

The Department of Public Works' (DPW) Five Year Plan for sidewalks and intersections will be presented in May.

Phil is budgeting an hour for Michael Stein's presentation at the April meeting. He is going to speak with Michael Stein at the end of the month, so send him anything you'd like him to address before then.

Department of Public Works (DPW) Update:

Jerry reported that construction season may start as soon as the end of March. It's going to be a very busy year. Lots of work by the city, MIT, and Boston Properties in Kendall Square. A lot of public streetscape improvement will be taking place, as well as a lot of work by private entities.

The reconstruction of Gore Street in East Cambridge, which goes by Miller's River housing development and the health center, will be taking place. Connects with Twin City Shopping Plaza and the skating rink. Work will include pedestrian and streetscape improvement project, traffic calming at Gore st and Rufo.

In West Cambridge, there will be work on Huron Avenue along Fresh Pond, including building a long missing sidewalk along the reservation side of Huron.

The River St project will hopefully start construction towards the end of this year, including Carl Barron Plaza. The project is getting closer to a design, which Jerry will share once it's solidified.

Work on Inman Square continues. Construction will be working around outdoor dining. Report any access issues to Jerry, Kate or Rachel, if contractors don't provide interim access through construction zones.

In Kendall Square, work on the Binney-Galileo corridor was begun by the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority and then the city took over the final design and construction. They will be reducing the number of lanes on the road, adding protected bike lanes from Galileo, up Broadway and down 6th Street.

Executive Director's Report:

Rachel is very excited about the upcoming retreat.

She is occasionally being tapped for input on things going on in Danehy Park, especially ground surfaces and colors and patterns on them. Looking at wayfinding and signage in Danehy Park and surfaces in the Universal Design playground.

She gave a presentation for Massachusetts Continuing Legal Education (MCLE), co-presenting with the Disability Law Center (DLC) and the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD) about service animals and the law. MCLE provides continuing education credits for attorneys and paralegals.

She is working with the Cambridge Public Health Department on their five-year plan for community health, particularly around access and equity related issues.

She has been attending a lot of meetings about distribution of COVID vaccines among the disability community. Individual municipalities are not getting a lot of vaccine stock to distribute. Phil asked if there is a prioritizing process for PwD. Rachel responded that the city is not that involved in that process because most municipalities are not getting doses. Residents in designated housing, such as elderly and disabled public housing are getting vaccinated. Mass vaccination sites are all wheelchair accessible and they have people available to help anyone who needs assistance. People with two or more co-morbidities that are on CDC list are currently eligible for vaccinations, but lots of people with disabilities have conditions that make them vulnerable to COVID complications but are not on that list. Lots of data exist showing that people with intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD) are far more likely to die of COVID, but nothing prioritizing that population is in state vaccination guidelines other than for folks with Down Syndrome. Plenty of disability organizations, including the Disability Policy Consortium (DPC) and the Boston Center for Independent Living (BCIL) have been advocating around this issue.

Kate added that the Fire Dept and Council on Aging have reached out to CCPD to ask for guidance in providing vaccinations to homebound Cambridge residents. Phil asked for a list of contact points that PwD can reach out to for vaccination information. Kate suggested calling 211 and checking the city's COVID web page.

Project Coordinator's Report:

Kate reported that the language justice provider survey closed on Monday, and she will get results in a meeting this coming Monday. The Language Justice Committee is taking inventory of what's working, what's not, and what resources city departments and nonprofits and schools need. They will make recommendations to City Council. Kate have a more robust update on their work next month, including their focus on the communication needs of people with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and PwD

Our police liaison Dan Wagner has been reassigned. We will get a new police liaison in the coming months.

Kate asked Phil what orientation manual updates she needs to make. Kate will send meeting times to Phil and Gary to discuss possible changes.

Kate asked that Phil add her and Rachel to the Google Group and said that it makes sense to run the creation of the Google Group by Ellen Semonoff to be sure we're not in violation of open meeting law.

Mary pointed out that the Zoom hand-raising function was not working, meaning people raising their hands were not being called on. Rachel said that only Zoom hosts could see raised hands on Zoom, and that's not who is facilitating the meeting. Further discussion about how we hold meetings may be necessary.

The meeting adjourned at 7:01 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Rachel Tanenhaus