

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

Minutes for Thursday, May 12, 2011

### **Present:**

Members: Elizabeth Dean-Clover, Sandy Durmaskin, JoAnn Haas, Alissa Land, Don Summerfield, Rachel Tanenhaus, and Dave Wood.

Alternates: Bet MacArthur

Staff: Kate Thurman

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

Guests: Kelly Downes, Cambridge Police Department; and Naomi Pinson, Cambridge Resident.

**Minutes:** Elizabeth Dean-Clover noticed that her name was not hyphenated in one paragraph and requested that it be corrected. A motion to approve the April 14, 2011 minutes as amended was passed.

**Announcements:** Bet MacArthur said that the Disability Reframed Community Film Series screening of "The Men" on May 7 was very successful. The next screening is scheduled for June 18 and will show a few episodes of "Gunsmoke", the longest syndicated, longest running television show in history, which features the most important character with a disability in television.

JoAnn Haas said that Harvard University will be celebrating their 375<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on October 14. She and other members also noted that the University's Disability Coordinator position is open.

**Chair's Report:** Rachel Tanenhaus thanked members for working with her as Chair for two years. She explained the election process for the Chair and Secretary positions.

Ms. Tanenhaus also said that interviews of the board applicants have been scheduled and that the candidates to fill the three openings should be chosen shortly thereafter, although the City Manager makes the final decision on who to appoint. She thanked members whose terms are expiring for their work.

She reminded members that the CCPD typically takes a month off in the summer, either June, July or August. A motion to skip the August meeting was passed by the Commission. Therefore, CCPD will not be meeting in August.

Ms. Tanenhaus suggested that the board start planning the annual October Disability Employment Awareness Month event in June or July.

**Elections:** Elizabeth Dean-Clower was nominated for chair, and Sandy Durmaskin and JoAnn Haas were both nominated for secretary. Ms. Dean-Clower and Ms. Haas accepted the nominations, and Ms. Durmaskin respectfully declined her nomination for secretary.

Elections were held and Ms. Dean-Clower and Ms. Haas were elected as Chair and Secretary, respectively, with all seven votes present.

**New Chair's Report:** Elizabeth Dean-Clower said that she sits on the advisory committee for the Kendall Square renovation, which is an ongoing project. She will be attending the next meeting on May 19 and will provide an update at the June meeting.

Ms. Dean-Clower said that she will discuss the structure of CCPD meetings in June and will provide clarity on what is appropriate to bring up during specific agenda items, such as announcements.

**Update on Sidewalk Obstruction Issues:** Ms. Haas said that the Commission is waiting to hear from Sue Clippinger in response to the board's letter recommending the addition of specific language to the Bicycle regulations prohibiting the locking of bicycles to street poles holding disability parking signs. [Editor's note: a copy of said letter is attached].

Ms. Haas reported that Trouble, a Somerville resident who has helped with outreach to the bicycle community is moving out of state, but that she offered to recruit other members of the community before she leaves town.

Ms. Haas also said that she is still hoping to produce a video public service announcement, but that funding for the project is a problem.

Kate Thurman reported learning of the Awesome Foundation, which has a Greater Boston chapter that awards monthly \$1,000 grants to help fund various projects. She said that the application is very simple and can be completed online.

Ms. Haas said that Boston has a volunteer advocacy group that helps people clear their sidewalks in the winter. She will email Kristen McCosh, Commissioner of the Boston Commission for Persons with Disabilities, to get more information on it.

Sandy Durmaskin said that there is a need for ongoing efforts for keeping unobstructed, clear paths year-round, and that she has been taking pictures of obstacles she encounters. She said that there are some specific problem areas in the City.

Ms. Haas said that Green Street Initiatives is interested in helping us with sidewalk obstruction issues. She will get in touch with them to discuss an awareness campaign. Ms. Durmaskin noted that the Initiative has a very active website, which contains photos of things in the community with descriptions of what they depict. She said that this might be a good way of communicating with certain populations at no cost.

Elizabeth Dean-Clover suggested that a member attend the Green Street Initiative meetings to represent the CCPD.

Bet MacArthur suggested enlisting bicycle stores. For example, they could hand out informational material with their receipts for bicycle sales and repairs.

Ms. Haas said that she has contact information for radio stations, to which she could send the public service announcement once it's finalized.

She also said that she has reported several potholes around Harvard to the DPW Pothole Hotline, but has not found them to be very responsive.

Ms. MacArthur reported emailing DPW to report 12 potholes, which they filled within a few hours. She suggested that Ms. Haas speak with Harvard, as DPW is unlikely to fill holes on Harvard property. [Editor's note: several streets in Harvard Square, which may appear to be public streets, are actually Harvard property].

Ms. Haas said that the Agassiz Baldwin neighborhood association emailed to inform her that S&H Construction of Cambridge will contract with neighborhoods to clear snow from sidewalks. She discussed the possibility of reaching out to the other neighborhood associations about this service. As members had concerns about conflicts of interest in endorsing any specific company, a motion to table until the July meeting the discussion of neighborhoods bulk purchasing sidewalk clearance services was passed by the Commission.

Ms. Durmaskin reported having concerns about the installation of several new bicycle racks throughout the City. She said that a few of the locations appear to impede accessibility and noted the importance of educating crews on the importance of installing racks in locations that will not create obstacles on sidewalks. Ms. Dean-Clover said that she would speak with Michael Muehe about this. Kate Thurman added that Mr. Muehe is in touch with the Community Development Department, which is very aware of accessibility concerns, regarding the installation of the new bicycle racks.

**Executive Director's Report:** Kate Thurman reported on behalf of Michael Muehe, who was unable to attend the meeting.

On Monday, April 25, Mr. Muehe attended a presentation at the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) along with members of the Boston disability commission and other advocates to review the MBTA's comprehensive systemwide plan for improving signage and adding wayfinding features at MBTA subway, light rail and commuter rail stations. This wayfinding initiative grew out of the settlement agreement that the MBTA reached with disability advocates three years ago. The MBTA plans to introduce the new wayfinding features on a pilot basis at three subway stations over the coming year.

On Friday, April 29, Mr. Muehe attended a statewide biannual meeting of transportation teams, hosted by the Work Without Limits initiative at UMass medical. Michael represented the Cambridge in Motion Team, along with Larry Haile from the MBTA. Eight teams from around the state discussed strategies for transportation management and improving coordination among transportation providers. Of particular note was the discussion amongst the various teams for developing a common open source web-based platform for sharing ideas and information, a platform that could be tailored for local conditions and situations.

On Wednesday, May 5, he attended the kickoff meeting of the new Health and Disability Advisory Committee, sponsored by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH). The group discussed setting priorities among various initiatives designed to reduce health disparities between people with disabilities and nondisabled people, based on the "Plan for Promoting the Health of People with Disabilities" introduced by DPH in January 2007. Some of the key "Winnable Battles" for public health advocates include nutrition, physical activity, obesity, food safety, and tobacco.

Rachel Tanenhaus added that this new committee will advise on priority areas on which to focus. She said that the Center for Disease Control, which has provided grants to the MA DPH since 1999, is interested in measurable outcomes of the initiatives. They have only recently started gathering such data on health disparities in persons with disabilities.

On Monday, May 9, Mr. Muehe participated in the sidewalk meeting led by the Façade Improvement Program coordinator Chris Basler, to discuss planned improvements for the new headquarters for Cambridge Community Television (CCTV) at 438 Massachusetts Ave. (the old Economy Hardware store.) CCTV plans to have a fully accessible facility, and their renovated space will include more studio space and more space for other programs. CCTV will have its grand opening celebration on Thursday, May 19 at 5 PM, in their new headquarters at 438 Massachusetts Ave.

**Project Coordinator's Report:** Kate Thurman said that CCPD has been invited to hold an informational table at the Cambridge River Festival from noon to 6pm on Saturday, June 4. A minimum of five volunteers are needed to staff the table. Elizabeth Dean-Clover, Sandy Durmaskin and Don Summerfield each volunteered to work a shift.

Ms. Thurman mentioned the possibility of sharing a table with the GLBT Commission or another entity, such as the Time Trade Circle. However, members passed a motion to have their own table. Some members expressed concerns over general accessibility at the Festival. Ms. Thurman said that she has been in touch with Julie Madden and Jason Weeks of the Cambridge Arts Council, who are aware of accessibility requirements. She will request that the CCPD table be located on level ground near a curb cut.

Alissa Land offered to help compile and update materials to hand out if needed.

Ms. Thurman also reminded members that the copy deadline for submitting AccessLetter items, such as calendar events, is May 16.

**Public Input:** Kelly Downs of the Cambridge Police Department said that Commissioner Hass has asked her to attend CCPD meetings. She asked that people let her know if they have any questions or issues regarding police and invited people to email her at <kdownes@cambridgepolice.org>.

JoAnn Haas asked Ms. Downes if the Police Department could work with Vinny Best at DPW on issuing tickets to illegally parked bicycles. Ms. Downes will look into this and report back to the Commission.

There was discussion about adding Ms. Downes to the monthly agenda and members passed a motion to do so.

**Old Business:**

Rachel Tanenhaus said that she is working with a group of people in reviewing the accessibility problems at the Hynes Convention Center MBTA Station, which is completely inaccessible. She said that the group meets monthly and that they will be holding quarterly public meetings.

Meeting adjourned at 7:30

Respectfully Submitted,  
Kate Thurman, Disability Project Coordinator