

City of Cambridge

Commission for Persons with Disabilities

51 Inman Street · Cambridge, MA · 02139-1732

617-349-4692 voice · Relay via 711 · 617-349-4766 fax



Keisha Greaves

Chair

Danielle Jones-McLaughlin

Secretary

Loring Brinckerhoff

Avril dePagter

Rayna Jhaveri

Melissa Miguel

Deepti Nijhawan

Emma Pan

Zach Solomons

Daniel Stubbs

Rachel Tanenhaus

Executive Director/

ADA Coordinator

Kate Thurman

Deputy Director/

Assistant ADA Coordinator

Maya Friedrich

Administrative Assistant

The Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities is holding an abbreviated meeting online via Zoom on May 8, 2025 from 5:30 – 7:00 PM

PLEASE MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO JOIN BY 5:30 PM

AGENDA

Please keep your microphone muted when you are not speaking

- | | | |
|---|---------|---|
| 1. Introductions | 2 min. | |
| 2. Announcements | 2 min | CCPD staff / Board |
| 3. Approval of April minutes <i>See pages 4-9 of this agenda packet</i> | 4 min. | CCPD Board |
| 4. Elections | 10 min. | |
| 5. Vote on Summer Recess <i>CCPD Board Members will decide whether to take July or August off</i> | 2 min | |
| 6. Presentation on Accessibility in Democracy <i>See pages 10-18 of this agenda packet</i> | 30 min. | Nieta Greene, Disability Community for Democracy |
| 7. Chair's Report | 10 min. | Keisha Greaves |
| 8. Staff Report | 10 min. | Rachel Tanenhaus |
| 9. Public Works Update | 10 min. | Melissa Miguel |
| 10. Public Input <i>See pages 2&3 of this agenda packet for instructions on providing public comment</i> | 3 min. | general public |

CART/closed captioning will be provided for this meeting

Captions can be turned on within the Zoom platform or streamed in a separate URL at <https://bit.ly/CCPDcaptioning>.

(captions will not appear until the meeting has started)

The City of Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities, does not discriminate, including on the basis of disability. The Commission for Persons with Disabilities will provide auxiliary aids and services, written materials in alternative formats, and reasonable modifications in policies and procedures to persons with disabilities upon request.

**The next CCPD meeting will be held on
Thursday, June 12, 2025 from 5:30-7:00 PM**

Members of the public: See instructions on pages 2 & 3 on how to watch the CCPD meeting and provide public comment via Zoom

Approved 8/14/2025

Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD)

Minutes for Thursday, May 8, 2025 CCPD Meeting

Online via Zoom

Meeting was called to order at 5:33 PM

Present:

Members: Keisha Greaves, Zachary Solomons, Melissa Miguel, Avril dePagter, Emma Pan, Loring Brinckerhoff, Danielle Jones McLaughlin, Deepti Nijhawan

Absent: Dan Stubbs, Rayna Jhaveri

Staff: Rachel Tanenhaus, Kate Thurman, Maya Friedrich

Other: Nieta Greene of Disability Community For Democracy, Inc. (speaker)

Announcements:

- The CCPD board retreat is coming up on 5/31 and Maya needs to confirm the number of people taking the DHSP bus to/from Central Square to downtown Boston (currently just Emma and Rachel are taking it there/back and Dan is taking it on the way back only so there are plenty of open seats)—Danielle said she would take it on the way back.

Approval of Minutes:

- The April CCPD meeting minutes were unanimously approved.

Elections:

- The board voted on our nomination for Secretary—Danielle, who was re-elected unanimously.
- The board elected voted on our nomination for Chair—Keisha, who was re-elected unanimously.

Vote on Summer Recess:

- The board briefly discussed whether to take the July 10 or August 14th board meeting off—board members did not express strong feelings about either month. Kate suggested July would be easier from a staffing perspective, and several board members agreed that July was preferable.
- The board voted to take recess in July 2025.

Presentation on Accessibility in Democracy:

Nieta Greene of Disability Community For Democracy, Inc. presented on the mission and work of her organization (see attached slides):

- Nieta described herself and why she started the organization—she is a resident of North Cambridge and has lived here for almost 9 years. She felt it was imperative to respond to attacks against the disability community in political rhetoric and started the organization in December of 2024. It has been a legal nonprofit for 5 months.
- She described the mission/vision of the organization (see slides).

- Nieta shared the organization's 4 different 'buckets' of work:
 - Grassroots: helping build connections across local communities
 - Legal/policy: includes litigation and advocacy—there are 4 regional committees around the country that focus on disability policy in those areas (different committees are talking about different issues in their communities, for example advocating against cuts to Medicaid and SNAP or organizing against registries for people with disabilities)
 - Campaigns: training people with disabilities to run for office/organize political campaigns
 - Framing: messaging/communications components including newsletter, social media, and website
- Nieta also talked about the events her organization has planned/is planning, including an upcoming disability pride event and a past event that brought notable Massachusetts political figures to speak.
- She emphasized that they advocate for community members with disabilities regardless of individual politics—everyone deserves to be treated fairly whether they are Democrat, Republican, or independent.
- She noted the importance of organizations like hers engaging with local government and make sure people with disabilities' voices are heard.
- A board member asked how volunteers are recruited—Nieta said there is a list for interested community members to sign up, and then active volunteers are assigned specific tasks.
- For the leadership/board Nieta said her organization seeks members who have personal experience with disability. She comes from peer support and a mental health justice background and believes people with lived experience are the most qualified to lead.
- A board member commended the importance of the organization and asked how they raise funds. Nieta said they currently accept donations through an online platform and are working to get tax-exempt status but are currently volunteer-run so fundraising capacity is limited.
- Disability Community for Democracy, Inc. is planning a disability pride event (possibly in July) for the 35th anniversary of the ADA:
 - Nieta & Keisha feel that having an event in an open-minded city like Cambridge would be powerful to stand up against attacks on the disability community
 - Nieta talked about growing up as a neurodivergent person and how current anti-autism rhetoric is very upsetting. She also discussed institutionalization policies against people with mental health conditions.
 - Rachel mentioned that Boston is having a celebration on July 23 and asked whether there would be overlap—Nieta is hoping the event she is planning will happen on the 19th but a date has not been set yet as the event is in early planning stages. Keisha specified that having an event in Cambridge itself would be special and that she already sent a proposal to City Councilor Marc McGovern, who seemed very supportive and suggested event spaces. Keisha hopes CCPD can be involved and possibly table at the event.
 - Nieta said the event could be a good opportunity to distinguish ourselves from Boston and let people know who we are beyond “the city of Harvard and MIT”. She also mentioned that she and other disability advocates in Cambridge were not aware that CCPD existed so the event could be an opportunity to let people know who we are.
 - Kate clarified that none of us are opposed to a disability pride event in Cambridge and mentioned the city's Special Events Committee (run by the transportation department). Organizers need to go through this process to make sure they have proper permitting, security, etc.—Nieta and Keisha were not aware of this process and said they would look into it.
 - Nieta acknowledged the special events process and said talking to City Council members to gauge interest/support felt like the most important first step. She also clarified that if the event cannot happen in July she still wants it to happen in August or September.
 - A board member asked about the event programming and Nieta said she hopes to invite disability justice advocates and political figures to speak at the event and possibly recognize/re-enact the 1990 Capitol Crawl.

- A board member asked how CCPD board members and CCPD staff could support the event. Nieta clarified that board members in their own personal capacities can plan/help, and city staff can consult about accessibility and provide insight into whether specific spaces are accessible (although we cannot recommend specific spaces).
- Avril mentioned a current Supreme Court case that would impact the ADA by putting the burden of proof of need for reasonable accommodation on people with disabilities—Nieta said she was aware of this and that similar attacks have happened over the last few decades.

Chair's Report:

Keisha Greaves reported:

- None.

Staff Report:

Rachel Tanenhaus reported:

- Kate and Rachel attended the virtual ADA Symposium this week (there is also an in-person symposium in Atlanta which CCPD will not attend). Rachel said she thought of Keisha because there was a workshop on accessible/adaptive clothing design! Workshops covered a wide range of topics—some highlights included how to make web pages accessible and how to build accessible charging stations for electric vehicles (Rachel passed this info along to folks in the city in charge of EV stations). Kate mentioned she and Rachel have attended both in person and virtual ADA conferences several times—they are very informative and bring in current context/case law but also very exhausting.
 - A board member asked if anyone could go to the ADA conference. Rachel said anyone can sign up but it costs \$450 (she did not promote it with the board because of the price tag). Rachel said most people who attend are ADA coordinators and can receive their continuing education credits and clarified that most people there are professionals/not covering the costs with personal funds.
 - Rachel specified that the in-person symposium is more expensive but provides amazing networking opportunities with people from all over the country. Attendees come from both the private sector and state/local/federal government. In previous years, people from the federal government have come to give updates on the current state of the ADA (not this year). Rachel appreciates the “highly nerdy energy” and always learns a lot, although each day contains 4, hour-and-a-half long workshops which are very technical and tiring.
- Rachel and some colleagues were interviewed by researchers at the University of Washington about how people with intellectual and developmental disabilities interact with ranked-choice voting and how to make that process more accessible. She clarified the researchers are talking to people with intellectual/developmental disabilities as well. One takeaway is that it is most important that people know how to cast a vote, which is a lot less complicated than understanding how votes are calculated (it is not as important to know this—just know how to say “this person is my first favorite, this person is my second favorite”). Ideally, people still should know the calculation process to be an informed voter, but it is not essential in order to participate.
- Rachel has been part of a working group for the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), which works on emergency preparedness and management for “access and functional needs” and is meeting up again. This term includes not only people with disabilities but also people who are not native English speakers and need to know there is an emergency.
- Rachel shared some upcoming events:
 - [Demystifying Mental Health Diagnoses workshop](#) is happening on Wednesday May 14th from 12-1:30 on Zoom. They are looking for people to sign up to attend, Rachel will try to be there but is also scheduled to be at our budget hearing.

- The [National Survey on Health and Disability](#) happens every year or so and is currently active. It is one of the largest surveys on the experiences of people with disabilities and collects information about health, transportation, employment, housing, and other aspects.
- The MIT Museum is having “quiet hours” (used to be called “sensory friendly event”) on Saturday, May 10 from 9-10am at 314 Main Street in Cambridge. [Registration for the quiet hours event](#) is required, but admission is free. The museum has another event coming up in July, but Rachel does not have the details yet.

Public Works Update:

See attached “DPW Update – May 2025” for details of Melissa Miguel’s Public Works update.

Public Comment:

A member of the public asked whether CCPD can provide training or recommend trainers for a CPTSD service dog. Rachel clarified that we cannot recommend specific businesses, but people can reach out to us if they have questions about their rights as a service dog user.

Meeting adjourned at 6:58PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Maya Friedrich



Disability Community for Democracy, Inc.

Mission Statement

Disability Community for Democracy, Inc. is a peer-run disability grassroots organization in the United States dedicated to preserving, protecting, and defending liberal democracy and our civil rights, no matter who is in power at the local, state, and federal levels.

Vision Statement

Disability Community for Democracy, Inc. is committed to ensuring that disabled Americans, who comprise close to 30% of the population, are seen, heard, included, elevated, and given a seat at the table. In addition, we aim towards proportionate representation in politics, government, society, and other spheres.

Structure/Buckets

- Grassroots
- Legal/Policy
- Campaigns
- Framing

Grassroots

- Working with our allies in grassroots disability rights organizations & building bridges.
- Identifying people in our community/allies who will help us
- Identifying our needs/what we can use: e.g. — content, art, etc.
- Support from the business community

Legal/Policy

- Policies that will protect and benefit our community.
- Litigation: being prepared to defend our rights and the laws that protect us in a hostile administration.

Campaigns

- Help disabled people run for office and win by engaging with organizations that train people to run.
- Involvement and inclusion in campaigns, engaging campaigns to make sure they have disability outreach staff, ways to include disabled people in volunteering, staffing, etc.

Framing

- Messaging to counter-narratives that hurt our community and ensure that we are fairly represented.

Questions

DPW UPDATE – MAY 2025

➤ On-going construction:

- **River Street:**

- Utility work to continue along River St towards Memorial Drive
- Significant construction continues in and around Carl Barron Plaza. There will be pedestrian detours and MBTA bus stop relocations ongoing for several months. Contractor to pay special attention to accessibility features – we will monitor closely.
- Full depth roadway reconstruction begins June
 - River St: Mass to Franklin
 - Green St: River to Pearl
 - Magazine St: Green to Franklin
- Carl Barron Plaza: installation of subsurface tree irrigation and aeration continues

- **Broadway**

- Broadway is eastbound only for vehicles between Galileo Way and Ames, with a 2-way bike facility on the south edge.
- This condition will extend to Third Street starting early Spring 2025, and last for around 1 year.
- This supports major utility work associated with the Volpe and Eversource Energy projects

- **Harvard Sq Kiosk**

- RIBBON CUTTING CEREMONY FRIDAY MAY 30th 10am – noon

- **Harvard Sq. Plaza**

- Phase 1 Sidewalk reconstruction on pause until phase 7 is completed. (No Roadwork during winter months)
- Phase 7 on going – Demo existing granite and reinforced concrete.
- Phase 7 duration - ~ 33 weeks
- Phase 7 involves Granite seating and wall, plaza re-grading, brick paver replacement, utility installations (water, sewer, drain) and electrical and telecommunication conduit work
- **Estimate Contract Completion Date – November 2026**

- **Chapter 90, Contract 24:**

- Huron Avenue – Complete
- Park Avenue - Complete
- Chestnut Street
 - brick sidewalk install complete
 - top course paving complete – Pearl to Pleasant
- Elm St
 - Some sidewalk work remains
 - Final paving Spring 2025
- Webster Ave – Complete
- Dodge Street
 - Utility work complete
 - Full depth road reconstruction complete
 - Sidewalk work complete
 - Final paving week of May 12th

- **Chapter 90, Contract 25:**

- **Maple Ave** Curb and sidewalk work underway
- **Montgomery Street** Curb and sidewalk work underway
- **Dana/Centre Streets** - Utility work continues

Contract Streets

- Green St- Pearl to Landsdowne
- Maple Avenue- Broadway to Cambridge
- Centre St – Dana to Hancock
- Montgomery St – Harvey to Rindge
- Sciarappa St- Charles to Winter

➤ **Upcoming projects:**

- **Linear Park:**
 - <https://www.cambridgema.gov/Departments/communitydevelopment/linearparkredesign>
- **Port Infrastructure Project:**
 - Phase I Utilities/Streets/Sidewalks to begin construction Fall 2025 (Multi-year project – more details to come)
 - Clement Morgan Park Reconstruction to begin Fall 2025
- **Mass Ave4 improvements:**
 - Linnaean-Waterhouse Median Removal begins Spring 2025 (Contractor has begun Tree Protection and Mobilization)
 - Separated bike lane installation will follow; beginning around mid-2026.
 - Concept development for Linnaean-Rindge; and Rindge-Alewife Brook Parkway continues. Public events to occur in 2025 for both segments.
- **Chapter 90, Contract 26: *Second round of community meetings are currently in progress***

Contract Streets

- Chetwyn Road – Newell St to End
- Gray Street – Martin to Linnaean
- Haskell – Rindge to Mass Ave
- Norfolk – Broadway to Somerville City Line
- Shepard – Garden to Mass Ave
- Avon Hill Street – Linnaean St to Upland Rd
- Hillside Ave – Avon Hill St to Washington Ave

If you are interested in receiving email notifications/updates for Chapter 90 - Contract 26, please email Melissa Miguel, P.E. at mmiguel@cambridgema.gov and you will be added to the contact list.