

Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD)

Minutes for Thursday, April 14, 2011

Present:

Members: Laura Brelsford, Elizabeth Dean-Clower, Sandy Durmaskin, JoAnn Haas, Eileen Keegan Bongiorno, Alissa Land, Don Summerfield, Rachel Tanenhaus, Kathy Watkins, and Dave Wood.

Staff: Michael Muehe and Kate Thurman.

Absent: Gordon Slater.

Guests: Tom Gilbert, Somerville resident; Nicole Horton, Department of Human Service Programs (DHSP) Inclusion Specialist; Renee Kasinsky, Cambridge resident; and Meredith Williams, Cambridge resident.

Minutes:

A motion to approve the March 10, 2011 minutes was passed by the Commission.

Announcements:

Rachel Tanenhaus reminded people that the Department of Public Health's Health and Disability Unit is holding another Healthcare Access: It Takes More than Ramps Conference on May 3, 2011 in Pittsfield, MA. It is geared towards healthcare providers, facility directors and practice administrators.

Don Summerfield said that representative Carl Sciortino has sponsored an amendment to increase the budget for the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission and Centers for Independent Living. He asked that people call their state representatives to ask that they co-sponsor the amendment. The deadline for co-sponsoring is noon on Friday, April 15.

Mr. Summerfield also reported participating in a three mile fundraising walk for Multiple Sclerosis last Sunday.

Bet MacArthur announced that the next screening of the Disability Reframed Community Film Series will be held on May 7, 2011. Marlo Brando's first film, "The Men" will be shown.

Mr. Summerfield said that Vinfen's Moving Images Film Series starts on Saturday, April 16 and that "Temple Grandin" is the feature film.

Elizabeth Dean-Clower reported attending the Boston Center for Independent Living's Marie Feltin Awards Ceremony, where Michael Muehe was presented with an award. She said that Mr. Muehe spoke very well about issues of fear and adaptation for persons with disabilities.

She also announced that the Disability Law Center is holding their fundraiser on May 12 and that Ted Kennedy, Jr. is the keynote speaker.

DHSP Inclusion Initiative: Nicole Horton spoke about DHSP's Inclusion Initiative and her role as the Inclusion Specialist. She said that she works with the Children and Youth Services Divisions of the department and that she is the point-person for parents who are interested in enrolling a child or youth with a disability in one of DHSP's 24 after-school programs.

Ms. Horton said that the Initiative started in 2001 with a grant from the Disability Law Center and that the City has been very supportive of the Initiative and continues to fund it. She said that currently 18% of the children enrolled in programs have disabilities and are on individualized education plans (IEPs), receiving special education services.

All parents who are interested in enrolling a child in any of the DHSP after-school programs must fill out a standard application, which includes a checkbox indicating whether or not the child is on an IEP. Applications for children on an IEP are reviewed by Ms. Horton, who meets with parents and their children to see what they are interested in and what their needs are. She works very closely with the Cambridge Office of Special Education, conducting classroom observations to determine what kind of accommodations are needed to ensure success for the child. Once she has completed her assessment of the child, Ms. Horton meets with the Inclusion Advisory Committee, which is comprised of the Children and Services Division Heads, Michael Muehe, Eileen Keegan Bongiorno, who is the Division Head of the Community Schools and a CCPD member, the DHSP Deputy Director, and two independent consultants. The Committee discusses the needs of the child and makes a decision on whether or not programs are able to provide the necessary accommodations to ensure success for the child.

She said that she begins meeting with parents in January of each year to discuss summer programs, and encourages parents to reach out to her early in the year before programs fill up.

Ms. Horton said that each of the programs has an Inclusion Facilitator and that they hire an additional 20 people to staff summer programs, going above and beyond what is required. The Division has a contract with the Judge Baker's Children's Center to train staff on inclusion principles. [Editor's note: for more information on Judge Baker's Children's Center, see <www.jbcc.harvard.edu/>].

Ms. Horton also provides training on inclusion and recently taught workshops at the Kids Included Together Conference in California.

Chair's Report: Rachel Tanenhaus reported that seven applications have been received for the three vacancies on the board. She said that a sub-committee would review them and interview the applicants, but that the City Manager makes the final decision on appointments. The sub-committee will meet in early May and the interviews will likely take at least two days to complete. Ms. Tanenhaus, Sandy Durmaskin, Dave Wood, Eileen Keegan Bongiorno and JoAnn Haas volunteered to be on the committee.

Ms. Tanenhaus also thanked Don Summerfield and Laura Brelsford for service on the Commission for the past six years. Their second three-year term expires at the end of April.

She said that elections for the Chair and Secretary positions will be held at the May 12, 2011 meeting and that nominations may be made up until that time.

Elizabeth Dean Clower was nominated for the position of Chair and accepted the nomination. JoAnn Haas and Sandy Durmaskin were both nominated for the Secretary position.

Public Works: Kathy Watkins handed out a list of ongoing sidewalk and roadway work that is part of DPW's 5-Year Reconstruction Plan. [Editor's note: information on the 5-Year Plan, including a list of ongoing roadwork may be found online at <www.cambridgema.gov/theworks/ourservices/engineering/aboutengineering/fiveyearplan.aspx>].

Ms. Watkins said that the Concord Avenue work is about halfway finished and should be completed by the end of the summer.

Update on Sidewalk Obstruction Issues: JoAnn Haas reported on a draft letter to the Department of Traffic, Parking and Transportation (TPT) regarding bicycle parking regulations. The draft was reviewed and a motion to send the letter with a few revisions was passed. Edits were proposed and a motion to send the letter as amended was passed by the Commission. A motion to copy the Cambridge Bicycle Committee was also passed.

Ms. Haas suggested that the Commission wait for a response from TPT before starting an outreach campaign to inform members of the bicycle community about the importance of not locking bicycles to disability parking poles.

Executive Director's Report: Michael Muehe reported that the City's Annual Holocaust Commemoration will be held on Wednesday, May 4. There is a period during which people who are members of a group targeted by the Holocaust, including people with disabilities, light candles. Don Summerfield volunteered to light a candle. Mr. Muehe said that everybody is invited to attend.

He also announced that a Cambridge Senior Town Meeting is being held on April 30 if any seniors are interested in attending.

Mr. Muehe reported meeting with an architect regarding Fay House of Radcliffe College at Harvard, which is the most historic building in that quad. Fay House is undergoing extensive renovation, and while they are making significant accessibility improvements, Harvard has applied for several variances from the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board due to the historical significance of the building.

He also said that he attended a panel discussion on Disability and Race at Harvard Law School.

Mr. Muehe said that he and Kate Thurman met with Rosalie Rippey, the coordinator of the Cambridge Parents Advisory Committee (C-PAC) about coordinating with the C-PAC.

He reminded people that the copy deadline for the June/July issue of *AccessLetter* is May 16 and encouraged people submit articles.

Project Coordinator's Report: Kate Thurman said that CCPD received an invitation from the Cambridge Arts Council to host an informational table at Cambridge River Festival on Saturday, June 4 from noon to 6pm. She said that five volunteers are needed to staff the table and that it would be broken into two or three hour shifts. Elizabeth Dean Clower, Sandy Durmaskin and Don Summerfield volunteered to work a shift at the table. [Editor's note: in order to reserve space at the Festival, a minimum of an additional two volunteers need to sign-up by the end of the May 12 CCPD meeting].

She also reported receiving a call from the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD) offering to conduct another presentation on discrimination at a Commission meeting, as they did last year. CCPD members decided to wait until the Commission's three vacancies are filled before scheduling another MCAD presentation.

Public Input:

Somerville resident Tom Gilbert reported that Green Street Initiatives has installed bicycle racks in the bus stops in Somerville.

Kathy Watkins said that Cambridge has bicycle parking guidelines that prohibit installing bike racks in bus zones.

Michael Muehe said that occasionally bicycle racks are installed next to disability parking spaces and have to be moved. He asked Mr. Gilbert to report specific locations if he comes across an issue with bicycle racks in Cambridge.

Old Business:

Don Summerfield said that he gave a presentation about his experiences at Northeastern University for students who are going into physical therapy. He said that Chris Carter, the Director of Behavioral Medicine at Spaulding Rehab, is teaching a Psychology and Disability course for physical therapy students.

He said that he will also be presenting to students who are going into psychology.

Meeting adjourned at 7:52 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kate Thurman, Disability Project Coordinator