

Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD)

Minutes for Thursday, June 9, 2011

Present:

Members: Elizabeth Dean-Clover, Sandy Durmaskin, Eileen Keegan Bongiorno, Alissa Land, Bet MacArthur, Naomi Pinson, and Rachel Tanenhaus.

Alternates: Don Summerfield

Staff: Michael Muehe, Kate Thurman, and Joanna Berton Martinez, pro bono associate.

Absent: Miriam Cooper, JoAnn Haas, Kathy Watkins, and Dave Wood.

Minutes: A motion to approve the May 12, 2011 minutes was passed by the Commission.

Discussion on the Structure of CCPD Meetings: As the Commission's new Chair, Elizabeth Dean-Clover discussed the structure of meetings going forward. She said that she will start the meetings as close to 5:30pm as possible and will inform members of any changes in the agenda at the start of the meetings. In addition, items that come up during the meeting that are not on the agenda will be held until the public comment or new business period. She also said that the time for announcements is primarily a period for members to inform each other of upcoming events. Ms. Dean-Clover also mentioned the possibility of including a regular agenda item for legislative updates.

Announcements: There were no announcements.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Update: JoAnna Berton Martinez, CCPD pro bono associate, reported attending the National ADA Symposium in Las Vegas, which was held in May and included instruction on the recent ADA Amendments Act and regulatory changes. She listed the topics of the workshops she attended and provided a brief overview of some of the information presented, including the following:

- The definition of disability has broadened. Specifically, the determination of whether or not somebody meets the definition of disability must now be made without regard to mitigating measures, such as medication or assistive technology. Prior to this change, many people who were otherwise qualified for protection under the ADA were not covered because of mitigating factors that put them below the threshold of the ADA's definition of disability.
- The definition of service animal has been narrowed to include only dogs. [Editor's note: for more information, see "Disability Q&A: New ADA Rules on Service Animals" in the June-July, 2011 issue of *AccessLetter*].
- New guidelines for qualified American Sign Language interpreters prohibit the use of children as interpreters for their relatives.

- New guidelines for video remote interpreting (VRI) have been established. For example, there are now technical requirements to ensure a good connection.

Other topics included:

- The Role of ADA Coordinators
- Changes to Titles I and II of the ADA, which cover employment and State & Local Government, respectively
- Emergency Preparedness and the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)
- The history of events leading up to the passage of the ADA in 1990
- Public Rights of Way Accessibility Guidelines
- Fair Housing Act
- Service Animals

Chair's Report: Elizabeth Dean-Clover reported that the CCPD table at River Festival was a great success. She thanked Kate Thurman for her preparation for the event and Sandy Durmaskin, Erin Gullage, Heidi Meyer, Don Summerfield, and Bobby Vilinski, all of whom joined her in working volunteer shifts to provide coverage. She said that a few people signed up for CCPD mailings and expressed an interest in volunteering for CCPD.

Ms. Dean-Clover also reported on the Kendall Square Advisory Committee, of which she is a member. This Committee is looking at the revitalization and renovation of the Kendall Square area. It is a 21-person committee and includes representatives from local businesses, MIT, and residents. She said that the Committee meets on the third Thursday of the month from 8am to 10am and that there will be a period for public comment at the June 21 meeting, which will be held at the Marriott Hotel in Kendall Square.

Ms. Dean-Clover explained that one of the goals of the Committee is to make Kendall Square a model community where people live in the same area where they work or go to school, and decrease the use of cars. Kendall Square housing has become too expensive for many people who work or go to school there.

Action Item:

- Elizabeth Dean-Clover will email CCPD members with a link to the website with information on the revitalization and renovation of Kendall Square.

October Disability Employment Awareness Month Event:

CCPD members brainstormed ideas and themes for the October event. There was a general consensus that the topic needs to have application across the spectrum of disability. Ideas included the following:

- Assistive technology in the workplace—possible speaker from MA Assistive Technology Partnership
- Web accessibility issues—bring in expert, such as the World Wide Web Consortium
- How can technology be used to address isolation and other barriers experienced by people with psychiatric disabilities?

- Role of the Internet in the lives and opportunities of people with disabilities
- How can the Internet and other technologies be used to facilitate the job seeking process for people with disabilities?
- Digital divide issues (poor people have less access to technology, etc.)
- Exploring the cross-section between universal design and technology
- Environmental issues in the workplace -- how can technology be used to address these? How environment affects health and function.
- What does access really mean?

Elizabeth Dean-Clower, Naomi Pinson, and Rachel Tanenhaus volunteered for the planning sub-committee. Michael Muehe and Kate Thurman will provide staff support.

Mr. Muehe said that he will send an email to members with the list of ideas and ask that they vote on one of the topics or suggest something different and also let him know if they have any ideas for possible speakers.

Action Items:

- Michael Muehe will send list of event ideas to CCPD members.
- CCPD members will vote on an idea or suggest a new one, and will suggest possible speakers in an email back to Mr. Muehe.

Public Works: Michael Muehe reported for Kathy Watkins, who was unable to attend the meeting. He said that this is a busy summer for construction and that DPW continues to work on access problems at construction sites. He asked that people contact CCPD or Ms. Watkins if they encounter accessibility problems. Each site has a project manager, who Ms. Watkins will contact if there is a problem.

Mr. Muehe also said that people may call Mike Knox at DPW (617-349-4854) to report sidewalk defects. There is also a new reporting form on the DPW website.

Disability Reframed Film Series: Bet MacArthur reported that the Series' Disability Images of the Mid-20th Century theme will finish up on June 18 with *Guns smoke*, the biggest TV show in history. She said that while the show is not about disabilities, one of the main characters has a disability. The film will be followed by a discussion about what the 1950's audience received from the presence of his disability, and how it was intended by the producers to be received.

Executive Director's Report: Michael Muehe reported meeting with Tom Hopkins of the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAB) to discuss pending changes in accessibility regulations. He asked members to let him know if they are interested in delving into this issue, as there are some major changes. Rachel Tanenhaus expressed an interest.

Mr. Muehe also reported that Work Without Limits has created a new packet of information called "Becoming an Employer of Choice," which is targeted to employers who are interested in doing more work with PWD.

He said that the YWCA on Temple Street is planning significant renovations and have requested several variances from the MAAB. There will be a hearing on the topic on September 26 at 2:00pm. He asked that members let him know if they are interested in attending.

Mr. Muehe said that July 26 will be the 21st anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Kristen McCosh, the Director for Boston's Commission for Persons with Disabilities, is sponsoring an ADA Day on Boston City Hall Plaza and is looking for partners and co-sponsors. Mr. Muehe said that he would email the information to members and asked if they would be interested in participating.

A motion was made to contact the Boston Commission to find out more as to what is involved in being an organizational partner. The motion was seconded and passed, and Michael Muehe agreed to contact Ms. McCosh.

Mr. Muehe reported attending a Façade Improvement sidewalk meeting at the corner of Columbia Ave and Cambridge Street with Chris Basler of the Community Development Department and the business owners who are planning on opening a yoga pilates studio at that location. The owners are proposing to open up an archway on Columbia Street that had been bricked over, in order to create an accessible entrance.

He also said that he sent a letter to Tom Hopkins of the MAAB regarding a variance request by Residences at Fresh Pond, a new housing development which has requested permission to build porches with stairs leading down to the sidewalk. Mr. Muehe said that such porches that lead to sidewalks must also have accessible ramps.

He reported giving a presentation to the Silver Ribbon Commission, which is comprised of seniors who want to continue living in their communities and neighborhoods, which are often inaccessible to their needs as they age. Mr. Muehe presented on Universal Design and visitability, a concept requiring that all new housing be constructed with at least one zero-step entrance and a bathroom on the first floor. Such construction would make it easier for seniors and persons who acquire a physical disability to stay in their homes and communities, and would also allow neighbors and guests with disabilities to visit.

Action Items:

- Members will contact Michael Muehe if interested in looking into the pending MAAB regulation changes.
- Members will let Mr. Muehe know if they are interested in attending the MAAB hearing regarding the YWCA's variance applications on September 26.

Project Coordinator's Report: Kate Thurman thanked Elizabeth Dean-Clower for coordinating the CCPD table at the River Festival, as well as those who volunteered at the table.

She also thanked Ann Connolly, Maureen Coyne and Sandy Durmaskin for their help with the mailing of the June/July *AccessLetter*. She said that she will need several volunteers for the next issue because the high school students who do a large part of the mailing will be on summer vacation.

Old Business:

Bet MacArthur said that she is writing a column on Disability as a Cultural Position for the National Association for Social Workers. She will email members with a copy of her article.

Action Items:

- Kate Thurman will forward an updated CCPD roster of email address to Ms. MacArthur.
- Ms. MacArthur will email members a copy of her article.

New Business:

Rachel Tanenhaus reported on an incident that occurred in Denver in which a taxicab driver made a blind woman put her guide dog in the trunk of his cab.

Sandy Durmaskin reported attending Michael Muehe's presentation on visitability and discussed the possibility of the CCPD discussing this issue further and voting to recommend that the City establish a visitability ordinance requiring that all new housing have three features: at least one zero-step entrance, 32 inches of clear passage through all interior doors, and at least one half bath on the main floor. It was decided that this will be added to the July agenda. She said that the United Kingdom has passed such an ordinance and that this would be an opportunity for Cambridge to be a leader in this initiative.

Don Summerfield announced that the Honorable Judge King will hold a meeting on the MBTA settlement at 1pm on June 20 at 10 Park Plaza, 2nd floor in Boston.

Action Item:

- Elizabeth Dean-Clower will add the topic of visitability to the July meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 7:35 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kate Thurman, Disability Project Coordinator