

**Mayor's Commission for Persons with Disabilities
Agenda**

**NOVEMBER 9, 2011
5:30-7:30 PM**

Piemonte Room, 5th Floor, Boston City Hall

Introductions

Approval of October 12 Minutes

Commissioner's Report: Kristen McCosh

Chair's Report: John Kelly

Letter to Atty. Gen. regarding remote participation

Copley Place Expansion Project

Disabled People in Elderly Housing

Snow Removal

Cable Show -- Ideas, PSA's

Public Input

Old Business

New Business:

Supplemental Meeting: Monday, November 21, 3 PM-5 PM.

Mayor's Commission for Persons with Disabilities

Minutes for Wednesday, November 9, 2011

Present:

(JK) John Kelly, Chair
(CR) Carl Richardson, Vice-chair
(AB) Arnold Berry
(EB) Eileen Brewster
(DE) David Estrada
(SL) Suzanne Leveille
(JW) Janice Ward
(HW) Heather Watkins

Staff Present:

(KM) Kristen McCosh, Commissioner
(KA) Kathryn Aldrich
(LS) Lakeysha Smith

Absent:

(JW) John Winske

John Kelly convened the meeting at 5:38PM.

Minutes were approved for October 12, 2011 with the following changes:

Copley Place design add “designed and contracted”

Disability Cable Show change to “airing” instead of “taping”

MBTA ride change to “decrease” use of the “RIDE” instead of “increase the use of the ride”

Commissioner’s Report – Kristen McCosh

New ADA compliant furniture to be delivered 11-18-2011 for Commission office all will be able to visit as the new office will be accessible.

Disability Mentoring Day with Mass Rehab event with 15 applicants and 5 employers for job opportunities, residency, etc was successful. One applicant was hired by Elderly Commission. CR inquired if city has equivalent of state’s”Model Employment” initiative for disability employment? Discussion of self-identify initiative by Think Beyond Label website. KM mentioned state launched model employment program to encourage self-identify. CR noted majority of people do not want to self-identify. JK questioned what is recommended regarding self-identify. KM and CR agreed, self-identify is a personal choice.

BRA meeting with Peter Gori, reviewed process of BRA. Jonathan Greeley to attend meeting on Dec. 5th to discuss Yawkey Way Extension/Station project - Meeting 12-05-2011 at 3:00pm in room 937

Scheduled conference call with Everbridge (company contracted by City to do emergency alerts) regarding making CAPTCHA accessible. Currently emergency alerts have no way for the deaf or blind to access. CR requested a tech based question. KM to send email

about CAPTCHA to CR. KM noted city is aware it is not in compliance and is working on it.

Cable show is airing on the 4th Wednesday of the month, on Channel 9 and/or 23. Commission will be able to make 3 PSAs per year. CR requested show to be captioned, KM is investigating if the show will be able to captioned and reviewing the prices. KM requested input regarding cable show ideas. Show will be taped Tues. Nov 22. "Disability News and Views" Ken to interview KM. CR suggested Kim Charleston, Perkins School for the Blind.

Reviewed Science Park opening, very nice elevator and "access is wonderful" complete with audio announcements.

Upcoming meeting with Walk Boston to develop more programs and discuss mutual projects

Site visit to Maverick Station had 6 of 7 areas in compliance, 1 area requires a variance due to high slope. EB and JK questioned curb cut on opposite side and CR noted the route was much longer. KM pointed out this was not considered an accessible route.

RIDE is planning on requiring eligibility to be determined by in-person assessments, by therapists and mobility specialists. JWI attended meeting for the RIDE, read the letter he wrote to the attorney general. Meeting was for input, not too late for input from community. CR believes meeting was a formality and the MBTA already has a plan. RIDE changes being discussed because it has too many applicants to sustain current business model financially.

Chairs Report: John Kelly

Site visit to Symphony Plaza and Symphony Hall Tower on 11-14-2011 at 3pm, 344 Mass Ave, A level room with William Conroy, Mass Transportation Dept. Presentation of streetscape project at Symphony Hall area regarding sidewalk and signaling. JK noted this was the best design for access (no brick!) CR requested APS (Audio Pedestrian Signal). KM noted Jim Gillooly from BTM was working on cost analysis for APS as APS may be required by law sometime in 2012.

Reported on 40 Temple St, rooming house with 12 rooms, new owner has to make 1st floor unit accessible. Beacon Hill Arch. Commission rejected 1st design with wheelchair lift. AAB called for a redesign. Commission supports the design for the entry to be located on the side of the building with access route through the park. AAB also supports side entry design. State reps, Marty Walls of Back Bay and Aaron M, did not support knocking down wall to allow for side entry. KM wrote a support letter for side entry design and to support the owner. Beacon Hill Arch Commission rejected side entry design.

Copley Place discussion: possibility of mitigating issues for people with disabilities. Meeting on Nov. 15 at Tent City, Copley Neighbors. BRA hearing set for Nov. 17th. JK reported dismay with comments not being posted to the web, as no comments posted from disability standpoint. BRA claimed difficulty uploading comments. BRA needs to covert notes and emails to PDFs. KM asked about press, JK hasn't seen any. KM noted a Northeastern reporter wants to interview people with disabilities. Issues to be raised are the bricks everywhere, raised planters, narrowing path, trees, ramp away from stairs. Simon Properties is a long time offender of compliance issues. Commission rejects Copley Place design.

JK noted MBTA is not staffing customer service booths and the settlement agreement requires them to be staffed.

John Winske attended meeting for the RIDE, read the letter he wrote to the attorney general. Meeting was for input, not too late for input from community. CR believes meeting was a formality and the MBTA already has a plan.

City council – Mass College of Art and Fenway Alliance to ratify institutions along Mass Ave for cultural district. JK going to hearing to protest this.

Special Meeting on Nov. 21st in BRA room 900. Christine Griffin, Assistant Secretary for Mass Executive Office for Health and Human Services.

Access Board shut down Converse Store on Boylston Street, JK passed on to universal hub, Converse had 2 years to complete minor changes, but neglected to do the work.

Somerville Armory was hosting city events, such as the Oct. 17th MBTA meeting, promoting the Armory as accessible. MBTA had to move meeting as it is not accessible with 13% slope, hump, etc.

Letter to Attorney General re Open Meeting Law – Commission wants participation for people via phone and will compose a letter, people are not able to form a quorum by their presence on the phone. JK proposes sending original letter revised. Original response was vague. There needs to be a reasonable accommodation. JK to send copy to DE.

New Business:

KM – Snow removal – Plowed snow is supposed to be shoveled again. EB is concerned about building owner paying someone to shovel, but plow negates initial shoveling attempt. KM pointed out that Public Works has attempted to address issue. JK brought up discussion of emergency access vs. human access. CR suggested priority list for

emergency, hospital, elderly and high density disabled areas. KM noted Public Works is committed to these.

KM reviewed Snow Removal Priorities Identified at Community Reception on May 19, 2011:

1. Priority Areas by disability community input 2. DPW high priority snow-clearing areas 3. Clarify City Snow Ordinance 4. Adopt a Curb Cut 5. Employ volunteers to help 6. Develop "Access Route" for Downtown 7. Clarify City Responsibilities 8. Clarify MBTA's ownership 9. Multi-faceted plan to ensure Neighborhood access
Map of accessible routes with curb cuts available.

Eileen raised the issue that she lives on Ruggles St. and was told that there was \$ to repair curb cuts, however the curb cuts and sidewalks have not been repaired. State managed stimulus contracts with City design. Oversight causes people to ride into the street.

Eileen raised the issue of the new project at Mattapan Medical Center, outside Mattapan Square on Blue Hill Ave near Citizens Bank. Problem with construction site and lack of access for wheelchairs as people are using current path for parking. Requires designated sign for handicap access.

Heather noted voting accessibility issue where ramp door was locked. Others would have been discouraged if locked, had a worker not been taking a break. CR asked if Election Commission was aware of access issues. KM said Election Commission was very aware of issues and has designated accessibility ambassadors trained.

SL mentioned the youth sports for kids with disabilities was lacking. KM noted there are actually a lot of recreation activities.

KM noted the City posted the Winter Event Brochure and it is complete with Wheelchair accessible symbols.

HW reported Roslindale is working on community development block grants for low-income and municipalities and getting more information to continue efforts to go Roslindale Accessibility projects.

CR noted City is creating an app to allow updates of violations for cars parked in handicap spaces. CR asked if there could be an app designed for SNOW violations, people send in picture of violations.

CR motion to adjourn.

JK adjourned.

Disability Commission Supplemental Meeting November 21, 2011

Present: Christine Griffin (CG), John Kelly (JK), Kristen McCosh (KM), Carl Richardson (CR), John Winske (JW).

Christine Griffin was in DC for year and a half, and then on another occasion for three years. She was at the Office of Personnel Management.

Employment: She says that one problem with trying to hire more disabled people is that you don't always know who's disabled. However, you can have an active recruiting campaign. Schedule A is a program in which employees self-disclose their status, and then employers can recruit them specifically (in government, harder to do in the private sector). Someone might eventually sue claiming that this is unfair, but CG says it will be cause for celebration if we get enough disabled people hired for others to get angry about it. At that point, she says we will break out the champagne.

The number of disabled people hired by the government has decreased steadily since the 70's. In Washington, CG was trying to change the government hiring policies, as an example for the private sector. She wants quotas of people with disabilities to hire. She wrote to the Bush administration to request an executive order, and refused to change her suggested order to be "aspirational" rather than to demand specific results.

The targeted disabilities of EEOC and the Department of Labor include blindness, deafness, para- or quadriplegia, amputees, and epilepsy. Non-targeted disabilities include Crone's Disease, alcoholism, etc. The baseline percentage of the people with disabilities are employed is 1.89% (check if this is the number of the right thing. It could be the percentage of federal employees who have disabilities.) There are two million federal employees in total. People with disabilities had their own executive order under diversity efforts of new administration.

CG mentions Bender Consulting, which is based out of Pittsburgh but has offices all over. It is a for-profit company to find jobs for people with disabilities. They are very good at vetting people.

Sandra Borders is the head of Equal Opportunity for Massachusetts.

State employment campaign started 3 years ago. The governor said that the state would become a model employer for people with disabilities and hope private sector will emulate them. There is also a campaign to educate people about why they should self-disclose, as well as staff training for people in leadership positions about hiring people with disabilities.

CG says that it is important to disclose your disability status because it's important to acknowledge the disability, in addition to taking advantage of programs. It is harder for people with hidden disabilities to disclose because they fear retribution. Also, for employers to become model employers, they have to be able to count disabled people in order to reach their quotas.

JW says that one of the biggest barriers in getting more people with disabilities hired is the special health insurance required for such people. Others say that's true in the private sector, but no longer in the government.

CG says, "All this health stuff is going to kill us."

JK: Tell us about your time at DLC.

CG: Disability Law Center is a protection and advocacy organization, a requirement for every state since the abuses of people with developmental disabilities and institutions. DLC got a big chunk of money from ADD, based on census data (i.e. if there are fewer people in the state, they reason that there must be fewer people in the state with disabilities, and so that state receives less money).

The Client Assistance program is through RSA, is not served by vocational rehab (VR). It takes any complaint from any person with a disability. However, it is not always satisfying to send people there.

CMS is the Center for Medicare/Medicaid Service. Mass Health here.

Bob Williams trying to revitalize "Ticket to Work" at Social Security. We should talk to him.

NDRN is the National Disabilities Rights Networks. Kurt Decker is in charge. And brilliant, says CG.

Money Follows the Person is a program meant to get people out of nursing homes and institutions, help them find housing etc. Could be really expansive and exciting. It's just starting out, so we don't know whether it's effective, but CG is excited about it. Won't go into effect until 2013.

PCA "cueing" is non-physical assistance from PCAs, e.g. reminding the client to put their socks on rather than putting the socks on for them.

There is movement toward professionalizing PCA work, e.g. creating certification, etc. CG now chair of PCA Counsel/Workforce Counsel. 9 people are on this counsel. Contact her if you are interested in a position on it. 30,000 PCAs in the state, 20,000 people who

use them. There is disagreement about what sort of training PCAs need. Certification and licensing are off the table at the moment. JK says, "good".

\$15 million are going to state community colleges for workforce planning. PCAs will bring up health coverage when they go in for collective bargaining in January.

What about the idea of spouses being PCAs? Right now, it specifically excludes spouses.

Look at models of housing for people with disabilities, even group homes with PCA units, etc. People respond that these are ghettos, but able-bodied friends might want to live there too. KM says that while a building model plan is desirable, it may be illegal to have a building ONLY for people with disabilities. However, there is an MS/ALS in Admiral Hill. They've expanded. It looks futuristic; automatic doors, etc.

Perkins School for the Blind- can navigate just by the floor, with eyes closed.

Tina Brooks has left her position.

CG: anything you don't know what to do with, call Ron Marlo, director of equal opportunities for ANF. Has done amazing things.

JK gives Martha Coakley letter to CG

The state currently allows remote participation in meetings, but the members not physically present do not count towards a quorum. CG will find out what she can and then get back to JK.