

DISABILITY COMMISSION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

Boston City Hall, Piemonte Room, 5th Floor

January 9, 2013
5:30-7:30 p.m.

AGENDA

- Call to Order
- Introductions
- Approval of Minutes – *December, 2012*
- Commissioner's Report – *Kristen McCosh*
- Chair's Report – *Carl Richardson*
- Architectural Access Update – *Kathryn Aldrich*
- Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) – Maria Cabrera, Mimi Turchinetz
- Remote Participation Update
- Temporary Sidewalk Update
- Standing Committees – Information Access, Community Access
- Commission Members Training
- Set Up Nomination Committee and Date for Election
- Old Business
- New Business
- Public Input
- Adjournment

Boston Commission for Persons with Disabilities

Minutes for Wednesday, January 9, 2013

5th Floor Piemonte Room Boston City Hall 5:30-7:30PM

Present:	Staff Present:
(CR) Carl Richardson (AS) Allegra Stout (BR) Ben Roux (HW) Heather Watkins (JW) John Winske Not Present: (AB) Arnold Berry (PH) Paulette Houston (RN) Raine Newman (SL) Suzanne Leveille	(KMC) Kristen McCosh, Commissioner (KA) Kathryn Aldrich (JH) Jesse Holm
Guest: Maria Cabrera, Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Coalition	

December Meeting Minutes: Minutes approved by board.

Commissioner's Report: Kristen McCosh

KMC met with James Nihan from the MBTA regarding The Ride. Participation is down 15%; believe that higher price per ride is causing this drop in participation. KMC and MBTA's James Nihan are currently brainstorming ways where participation can be increased for users of The Ride.

KMC met with Commissioner Shea of the Elderly Commission regarding increasing the number of lift equipped vans, as well as increasing the use of the senior shuttle service.

KMC continues to discuss Hackney taxi cab services with Boston Police Department (BPD). At this point, it is reported that 75% of taxi cabs in Boston have Audio Communication for individuals who are blind. The HAILO Application is also being implemented; this program calls an accessible cab to a specific location without giving information about the person that is being picked up and the taxi cab cannot refuse service to individuals with disabilities when they arrive.

KMC attended the ribbon cutting for the Park Street Station elevator on December 21st. This elevator gives individuals with disabilities direct access to Park Street station, without having to circumvent many pathways to enter the station. This elevator is followed by other stations that have recently become accessible as well; State Street

and Copley are two stations that have become accessible in the past few years. The Government Center station accessibility project is set to begin in the next year, and will upgrade accessibility on the plaza.

KMC will be meeting the week of January 14th with Rafael Carbonell, Deputy Director for the Boston Main Streets Program, about possible collaborations. KMC hopes to discuss accessibility checklists for neighborhood businesses, ranging from low- cost repairs to high-cost repairs.

KMC states that Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CPWD) is part of the Human Services Cabinet. As part of this cabinet, CPWD wants to increase events and activities. Right now, CPWD has four main events each year. Each year, a Community Forum is held where Boston residents can meet with the CPWD and explain what they feel are the biggest issues in the disability community today. CPWD also holds “Disability Mentoring Day” in October for individuals with disabilities. Additionally, CPWD holds a celebration in the summer to acknowledge the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). KMC hopes to add an advocacy component to this event; perhaps residents visit their City Councilors? KMC is hoping to launch the Disability Walking Tour this summer as well, possibly at the ADA Day celebration. Contact KMC if you know anyone interested in an internship that might assist with this project. The fourth main project consists of summer internships.

KMC tells Commission that the Advocacy & Outreach Position in the CPWD is still open although it is not posted on the City of Boston (COB) website. It’s an entry-level position that offers the unique opportunity for an individual to be creative. KMC is also hoping to hire a Deputy Commissioner. This position has not been posted yet, but KMC hopes to know by February 1st if it will be posted soon.

KMC mentions the Film Series that the CPWD is holding in collaboration with the Cambridge Disability Commission. Children of a Lesser God will be shown this Saturday, January 12th, from 2:00-5:00PM at the Cambridge Citywide Senior Center. The next film will be in March in Boston, location to be determined. The movie will be about Helen Keller’s life.

Additionally, KMC references the COB Hopeline, which is a job hotline for teenagers. Teenagers can sign up for summer employment through this hotline, so if you know any students with disabilities that are looking for a summer job, let KMC know and direct them to the Hopeline. There is also a Youth Employment job fair at the Boston Public Library (Copley T station) on February 16th.

KMC hasn’t received any complaints or requests for snow removal with the last snow fall. KMC meets regarding snow removal regularly.

Chair’s Report: Carl Richardson

CR states that he has few updates at this time. CR mentions that he has been looking at all of the variance requests sent out by KA closely.

CR is working with Netflix and Apple on Accessibility. If Commission Members have any input, please let CR know.

Kathryn Aldrich: Architectural Access Update:

KA mentions that a number of AAB variances were granted recently. Northern Avenue Bridge was granted by the AAB with conditions such as railings, landings, and an accessible route.

KA notes that the following projects were granted by the AAB recently: 100 Pier 4, 319 Rear A Street, 157 Berkeley Street, 66 Sleeper Street.

Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Coalition: Maria Cabrera

MC gives a brief history about the EITC. The program has been in existence for twelve years. There are Ambassadors that speak seven different languages, and there are 1-2 individual Ambassadors for each language spoken. Ambassadors go into their communities and talk with COB residents about this program. The guideline is if you are an individual and/or family that makes less than \$50,000 a year, a trained Tax Preparer will assist you with filing your taxes for free. Volunteer tax preparers are extensively trained and are given new training each year on new credits available. Tax preparers are also well-versed on credits for individuals with disabilities.

MC notes that the EITC Coalition also offers financial guidance as well. The Coalition teaches individuals about their credit score and why it's important, connects individuals to financial resources around the COB, and assists with financial planning.

Almost all tax preparation sites (there are twenty seven sites at this time) are accessible. There are still one or two sites that are not accessible. Within the past few years, the Coalition has started training Tax Preparers and Site Coordinators (who are volunteer managers of each location) on working with individuals with disabilities. The presentation is a forty-five minute overview discussing "the basics" of disability services: What is a disability? What is the ADA? What is the best way for me to serve people with disabilities? The training emphasizes using people-first language, and that ideas of "pity" or "pedestal" are both inappropriate ways of working with people with disabilities.

Recently, a Disability Working Group was formed from a number of members of the EITC Coalition as well as individuals working in the field of Disability Services. This working group is hoping to find new ways to reach the disability community as well as continuing to work on full accessibility for individuals with disabilities.

MC states that the EITC Coalition is also trying to get ASL interpreters for each site. The Coalition is hoping to connect with the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MCDHH) on this issue.

MC distributes EITC fliers to Commission members and CPWD staff.

Old Business/New Business:

CR requests that KMC follow up with Legal Department regarding remote participation.

CR follows up with KMC regarding the complaint sent to the Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD) about temporary asphalt ramps on some streets. There is the worry that they will be destroyed by snow and plowing. KMC is waiting to hear back from Public Works, and believes that construction might open early if it is a mild winter and the ramps can be fixed at that time.

CR requests that BR look at different COB web pages and looks at accessibility for individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing and report back to the Commission in February.

CR notes that he wants to create standing agenda items for Commission meetings. CR reiterates that the three main standing committees at this point are 1.) Strategic Planning for Commission, 2.) Community Access (including AAB reviews), and 3.) Information Access. CR requests that Commission adds brainstorming session to the agenda soon.

KMC will look into if the Commission members can have sub-committee meetings and/or discussions in between Commission meetings under the Open Meeting Law.

KMC will work on getting new Commission members training in the Open Meeting Law (OML). KMC will also work on getting new Commission members sworn in.

CR notes that in the February Commission meeting, individuals will be nominated for open positions on board. In the March Commission meeting the board will hold an election for open positions.

AS requested a description of open offices. CR and KMC will work on this request.

Public Input:

No public input.

Adjourned at 7:16PM.