

Boston Commission for Persons with Disabilities

Minutes for Wednesday, September 22, 2010

Present:, Eileen Brewster, John Kelly, Suzanne Leveille, and Heather Watkins. Arnold Berry, Carl Richardson, and Janice Ward were absent. Jay Walsh represented the City. Commissioner Tom Tinlin from the Boston Transportation Department (BTD) came to the meeting along with Gregory Rooney, Director of Enforcement for BTD. Commissioner Tinlin met with the commission first, and the regular meeting followed. The meeting started at 5:05 PM.

The Commissioner described BTD as the #1 enforcer of ticket violations in the city, that it regulates all city curbsides. It wrote 12,000 tickets last year for HP parking violations. Tickets are down nationwide about 7% because of the recession.

The number to report parking violations is 617-635-3125, 24/7 except Sunday, when the main hotline number of 617-635-4500 can be used.

Commissioner Tinlin's biggest concern is the rampant abuse in the temporary placard program. Unlike HP plates, placards are given to individuals, but are meant only to be used for accessible transportation for the holder. But friends and relatives use the placards for their own convenience, and what was originally intended to be a temporary privilege has become a permanent program.

One concern is what to do about these spots when placard holder dies or moves. He emphasized that city does not want to harass legitimate placard users. Heather, who has a placard, reported being accused of not being disabled, and that some disabilities are not apparent.

Another concern is that placard users occupy downtown metered spaces for the entire day. This prevents meter turnover and legitimate placard holders from being able to visit downtown. One possibility would be to limit placard/plate holders to a 4-hr maximum at meters. Overstaying at the meter would result in a \$25 fine. Members were receptive to this idea.

Current penalty for HP placard abuse is \$500, along with license suspension—but it is difficult to deny benefit to person for whom the placard was issued. State schedules a hearing for action.

The commissioner will prepare a package for the commission, detailing possible adjustments in enforcement, renewal, and use.

Tom thought a map of HP spaces is a good idea, and will investigate possibility for downtown.

Members mentioned problems in privately owned lots. Tom said that it is up to the lot owners to control enforcement, usually by having people towed. BTD is limited where it can write tickets, for example, it can only ticket in certain BHA properties (BHA police writes others). Tom will investigate enforcement options for parking plazas in neighborhood shopping districts, such as in Roslindale.

Regarding a possible HP parking fine increase: city council would need to give its approval. The commission should develop a plan for expending any received funds. Jay said bad economy may make fine increase difficult.

Members asked about inaccessible bus stops at Boylston/Cambria streets and opposite the State House on Beacon Street at the Shaw monument. The commissioner said that the MBTA chooses the stops. John said that either the stops need to be moved or be made accessible. It wasn't clear how this will get resolved.

Discussion with Commissioner Tinlin ended at 6pm, when the regular meeting started.

August Minutes were accepted with proposed grammar fixes by Suzanne.

Announcements: Jay announced that Disability Commissioner Spinetto is to retire at the end of September, and that the 3 commission members up for renewal have been reappointed. Jay will coordinate swearing-in. There have been 13 applications for the 2 openings.

Heather is the new "Mayor of Roslindale," and will be crowned at the Roslindale Day Parade at 1pm on August 3rd. She will use her tenure to spotlight access issues in Roslindale, especially steps into businesses.

John announced a meeting to be held by DCR on October 7th at Wheelock College. It is a public meeting to discuss materials for crosswalks and park paths. It will go from 6:30 PM-8 PM at the Wheelock College Campus Center, 150 The Riverway, First Floor Multi-Purpose Room – Room 103.

Eileen raised issue of dangerous ramp recently installed on Ruggles St. Jay to follow up.

Accessible City Hall Route: In the interest of time, John skipped over the agenda item on variances, and updated the commission on the city's changed route selection to #1, which was the commission's original first choice. It runs from Court St at Tremont past the Steaming Kettle (Starbucks) directly onto the plaza. New project manager Leo Murphy will provide a design image once it is generated. John scheduled a meeting with Mr. Murphy for October 18 at noon, and will provide details to members interested in coming.
City Self Evaluation: Jay said that the city plans to work internally rather than

contracting out, and will first identify access improvements that it already made in completing various capital projects, comparing them to the plan from 1992. A project leader has not been identified. Regarding citywide access plans, Jay will check to see whether sidewalks were included in the comprehensive ramp survey from 2 years ago.

Commission Perception: Jay suggested, and commission agreed, to postpone the meet-and-greet until November 17th, which will replace the normally scheduled commission meeting. By this point, a new commissioner and commission members will be available to meet the public. It will be held on 8th floor of city hall, from 5-7pm.

Suzanne hoped that the commissioner job will be publicly posted, but Jay said that it is a closed search, and that candidates have been identified. He reiterated that no role will be given to the commission, as he would not want a commissioner to be personally indebted to commission members.

Minutes taken by Loren Guzman and written up by John Kelly.