



Boston Disability Commission Advisory Board

BOSTON CITY HALL | ONE CITY HALL PLACE | 9th FLOOR | ROOM 967 | BOSTON MA, 02201
 617.635.3682 | fax 617.635.2726 | TTY 617.635.2541 | www.cityofboston.gov/boardsandcommissions

Minutes for Thursday, July 23rd, 2015
 9th Floor BRA Board Room 900, Boston City Hall, 5:30 – 7:30 PM

KRISTEN MCCOSH
Commissioner

Commission Members

Heather Watkins
Chairperson

Allegra Stout
Vice Chairperson

John Winske
Secretary

Marc (Moses) Mallard
Treasurer

Zary Amirhosseini

Kimyatta Campbell

Carl Richardson

Kyle Robidoux

Ruben Roux

Present:	Staff Present:
(AS) Allegra Stout (HW) Heather Watkins (JW) John Winske (KC) Kimyatta Campbell (KR) Kyle Robidoux (ZA) Zary Amirhosseini (MM) Marc (Moses) Mallard Not Present: (BR) Ben Roux (CR) Carl Richardson	(KMC) Kristen McCosh, Commissioner (KQ) Kathryn Quigley (JD) Jessica Doonan (CM) Chris Morawski
Guest: Mac McCreight, Greater Boston Legal Services	

April Meeting Minutes:

John Winske (JW) motioned to accept June minutes, Allegra Stout (AS) seconded motion. Minutes approved by Board

Guest Presentation: Mac McCreight, Greater Boston Legal Services

Mac McCreight (MMC) introduced himself and explained that he is from Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS) to speak about Boston Housing Authority (BHA). MMC stated that presently BHA's portfolio has about 3,000 to 4,000 housing units set aside for Elderly and disabled residents. Around 1999 BHA wanted to limit the number of housing units for younger (under age 62) disabled persons in public housing and HUD agreed to 70% elderly 30% non-elderly disabled. This Spring HUD approved a proposal from BHA changing the unit breakdown to 80% Elderly and 20% non-elderly disabled. The proposal included set aside "mitigation vouchers" and will exempt the wheelchair accessible units that are in BHA portfolio; those units will go to people who need those features regardless of their age. Those 300 non-elderly disabled persons who are no longer able to receive BHA housing will be eligible for section 8 vouchers repurposed from turnover. It is believed by GBLS, Boston Center for Independent Living (BCIL) and the Disability Law Center that vouchers are not as good as public housing and can make finding housing more difficult. MMC reported that BHA has agreed to work collaboratively with a number of organizations to help with the housing search and on stabilization. GBLS met with BHA about their concerns and BHA will have a public meeting for comments on August 11th and written comments by the 17th At the Armory St Housing Development. MMC asked the Advisory Board to assist in monitoring the housing situation and noted that GBLS will be doing the same.

JW commented that he thinks that it is unfortunate that the BHA proposal passed given that the Board took a stand against the change in policy and the number of people on the waiting list with disabilities. JW perceives the situation as backlash against the community because the community refuses to abandon people with mental health disabilities. Moses Mallard (MM) wondered if there a way to work with people with disabilities who have arrears due to losing their public housing previously. MMC responded that BHA has a policy that if a person has arrears they are given 30

days to pay before being taken off the waiting list. Under the Section 8 policy people have until their name is the top of the waiting list to have paid. Sometimes BHA and other agencies such as Home Start will work with people who have arrears. Commissioner Kristen McCosh (KMC) noted that BHA has more accessible housing as opposed to community based multi-family housing which has units on the 2nd and 3rd floors and wondered if anything is being done to address that with BHA. BHA has a portfolio of project based housing and has historically it has not listed if units are accessible or not but MMC recommended contacting Lydia Agro who is the Director of Staff at BHA. In regards to multi-family housing that would be a good discussion to have with the office of Fair Housing and Equity to see if they list which units are accessible. MMC noted that the amount of accessible multi-family units offered by HUD is something that GBLC and BCIL should look into. MCC suggested attending the semi-annual meetings BHA will be hosting on how the new Policy is working. MMC also suggested talking to the Department of Neighborhood Development (DND) to see if there is any City funds that may be able to assist individuals remove financial barriers to housing.

Welcome New Member: Kristen McCosh

KMC then introduced new Board member Kimyatta Campbell (KC). KC said her interest in joining the Board is due to having an autistic daughter and wants to find ways to support children and adults with special needs. She lives in Hyde Park and currently works the Boston Public Health Commission as a parent engagement manager doing outreach and works with children from zero to eight around mental health challenges.

Chair Report: Heather Watkins

Heather Watkins (HW) noted that yesterday was the Boston celebration of the 25th anniversary of American with Disabilities Act on the Boston Commons and she thanked everyone that was involved. KMC noted she saw many Board members and estimates about 2,500 people showed up. Zari Amirhosseini (ZA) loved the band and told the Board that many people were impressed with the organization of the event and the presenters. MM seconded that the event went smoothly. JW asked if the celebration will be back at City Hall Plaza next year which KMC confirmed and added that the 30th will be back on the Boston Commons.

Commissioner Report: Kristen McCosh

KMC noted that both she and MM serve on the Disability Housing Task Force for the City of Boston. One of the items being worked on is trying to find a product that will help people find accessible housing. The Housing Task Force is hoping to create a product that lists all the accessible housing for the City of Boston in one location since right now it is compartmentalized between BHA, DND, private owners, Fair Housing, and MetroList. KMC emphasized that since it is a City task force the focus will be on creating partnerships within City Departments.

KMC noted she is also on another task force for called Vision Zero which is an initiative through Boston Transportation Department (BTD). Vision Zero is part of a national initiative striving to have zero pedestrian deaths by more effective transportation design. Data is being looked at from Boston Police, Boston Bikes, and BTD to come up with a plan to significantly decrease pedestrian fatalities and accidents. Kathryn Quigley is also on the task force.

Go Boston 2030 is also a committee that KMC and JW serve on working to envision transportation options for the future. A visioning project just occurred in which people could write their grand ideas about how transportation could be in the future, from flying to having an electrical walkway all around the City. From the visioning project the committee is now focusing on creating goals and a multi-phase plan for implementation. JW noted it has been an interesting experience with people from a wide range of backgrounds and the final report is going to be interesting to look at. KMC said she really is impressed with both committees because they really take in to account accessibility in every way.

KMC noted she is meeting with Councilor Wu and Uber to discuss ways for Uber to provide accessibility. Hackney currently has 18 wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV) and will have 100 by 2017 so it would be a big loss if the industry potentially forced taxis out of business because of competition. JW asked if the Human Rights Commission could make accessibility a requirement to operate in the City of Boston. KMC said not to her knowledge, she suggested that the Board write a letter supporting access to Uber.

KMC noted the Main Streets MEWE app project is still in progress to come up with an app where people could go in and do an accessibility checklist of neighborhood businesses that would give businesses ideas on how they can improve their accessibility right away, mid-range and long-term down the road that may cost more money. Hopefully, the program can be launched in the fall.

KMC and KQ attended a City Council hearing to talk about sandwich boards. The Council listened to testimony from residents on both sides, KMC, Inspectional Services Department (ISD) and Inspectional Enforcement. KMC was glad to know that ISD and Inspectional Enforcement immediately tickets for access violations. KMC understands that sandwich boards assist in drawing in foot traffic to store but that they can also be a dangerous obstacle for those people with visual impairments. ZA and AS both noted they were contacted in regards to their opinion on sandwich boards. ZA was physically approached but did not answer and directed the man to KMC. Councilor Wu held an on-line town hall meeting where a company called Agora listened to peoples comments on sandwich boards and AS was contacted. AS asked about the accessibility of the website and was told it isn't yet but that it is a priority. ISD is going to draft a policy and to discuss in a working group. KMC will submit the Board letter to City Council in the next two weeks.

MM noted that there is a Board being formed through the Attorney General's office and voiced concern that it appeared to not have anyone with lived experience on it. KMC said she does not know how that Board was selected but explained that different Boards serve different needs and having too many voices on a Board can cause it to be unproductive discussion. The Attorney General's Board is made up of people from high levels in various disability organizations that hear the communities concerns and bring them to the Attorney General.

Architectural Report: Kathryn Quigley

Kathryn Quigley started her report talking about Boston Accessible; a proof of concept wayfinding app the City has developed to allow residents and visitors to map out the most accessible routes in Boston. KQ is working with the Public Works Department (PWD) to survey and identify barriers in the City and with the Office of New Urban Mechanics to develop the app that will operate similarly to Google Maps. Currently Disability Commissions across the country are being approached to be partner cities in this project in hopes of being able to develop data standards and gain the interest of technology companies who may be able to help expand the reach of the project. This app will also assist PWD in identifying most used routes which then can receive priority reconstruction or maintenance.

KQ explained that one of the ways PWD identifies projects or areas of reconstruction and maintenance is through complaints. KQ has been meeting with PWD to see how accessibility can be built into reconstruction prioritization with the goal of creating more accessible routes. KQ is looking to partner with PWD on safe routes to school, transit, government, hospitals, etc. with the goal of creating safe accessible routes all over the City for everyone. The sidewalk accessibility partnership program in the Leather District is a step the City is taking towards this goal. Beach Street is a major connection between South Station and Chinatown which is currently not passable for anyone, but PWD is now in the planning phase of how to reconstruct the sidewalk to make it accessible and safe for all. It is the first project for the sidewalk accessibility partnership program and PWD is committed to doing the work.

KQ then touched on the MEWE app and asked that the Board to email her if they had any ideas of the barriers in their neighborhoods that would have readily achievable solutions. JW noted that some businesses have a one step up barrier and wondered is there any talk about raising sidewalks to businesses that have this barrier. KQ replied that she will look into that and noted that the app will suggest to businesses a temporary ramp which could also be shared with other nearby businesses to defray cost.

KQ noted she is on the South Boston Waterfront Sustainable Transportation Plan Pedestrian Wayfinding Subcommittee. The subcommittee has a variety of partners, meets weekly, and will be unveiling wayfinding signage on the waterfront August 10th. There are 3 specified routes that go to and from the Convention Center; one is from Summer Street, one is from World Trade and one is from Fan Pier. Each sign has a hashtag on it which will allow the public to comment on the effectiveness of the signage.

KMC provided an update on Beacon Hill stating that the Law Department believes the injunction is likely to be lifted in the near future and are hopeful that the work will continue this construction season

Old Business

AS thanked the Board for their support for the Alternative Housing Voucher program, reporting that Governor Baker approved a budget including a 1.05 million dollar increase for the program.

HW noted that in the toilet tissue holder in the fifth floor accessible bathroom on has been moved and placed above the grab bar which makes the grab bar inaccessible. KMC replied that issue has been noted and is in the process of being resolved.

MM will be hosting an event on August 12th at 1960 Washington Street working to bring mental health information to the African American community.

Old Action Items

KMC reported the sandwich board letter is in the process of being completed and will be submitted it to the City Council.

JW made a motion that a letter be sent to the Mayor's Taxi Committee emphasizing that any services available in the City of Boston must be accessible to all. The motion was seconded by ZA seconded it and unanimously approved by all present.

The state-wide Disability Commission meeting is August 5th, 2015 from 10:30 AM to 12:30 PM at One Ashburton Place.

New Business

HW noted that the idea of meeting on disability issues and the Olympics has been suggested and asked the Board their thoughts on hosting the meeting. Many questions have been raised in the community in regards to how the Olympics and the Paralympics would affect the disability community and the meeting would provide a place for those questions to be asked and discussions to be had of how to make the most of the changes. KMC spoke to Cheri Blauwet about the meeting possibility and she offered Spaulding as a cosponsor and as a location for the meeting. MM noted that displacement was a big issue being discussed at an Olympic meeting he attended and needs to be part of the conversation. JW made a motion that the Advisory Board co-sponsor a meeting on the Olympics/Paralympics and its impact on the disabled community. AS seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by all present.

MM suggested that the Board look into the impact the new casino in Everett will have on the disability community. HW noted that the Board is restricted to Boston activities but KMC offered to get in touch with the Commissioner for Everett.

Jessica Doonan (JD) asked that an official motion be made in regards to the letter JW referenced as she did not hear one occur. JW motioned that we send a letter to the Taxi Commission that says all services in the City of Boston be accessible to all. MM seconded it and it was unanimously approved by all present.

ZA invited the Board to attend an event on September 10th from 2:30PM to 4:00PM at Mass General Hospital and she will send the information to JD to send out to the Board.

New Action Items

No new action Items.

Public Input

Atara Schimmel from Newton thanked the Commission for selecting her poster as the winner of the ADA Poster Contest, noting that it has had a real impact on her as an artist and in her goal of bringing awareness to chronic pain, specifically chronic pelvic pain. Atara explained to the Board that she suffers from hypersensitivity to sound and is struggling with the Town of Newton in regards to the decibel level of leaf blowers being used. KMC said she suggested that Atara contact Newton's Disability Commission and noted that she would look into any ordinances the City of Boston has and would share them with Newton.

Hannah Barrett introduced herself and explained that she is hoping to be more involved with the Commission. She then asked the Board to help spread the word of about a new social group she is starting for college students and young professionals with disabilities in their twenties and thirties. The group will also consist of guest speakers presenting about their experiences having a disability navigating through education and the workforce.

Joe Walsh introduced himself and noted he is the co-chair of the Youth and Sports Committee for Boston 2024 and the founder and president of Adaptive Sports New England, a sports club for youth and young adults. He applauded the Board on their vote to host a disability focused Olympic meeting and offered himself as a resource moving forward.

JW made a motion to adjourn which was seconded by MM and unanimously approved by all present.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:20pm.



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KRISTEN MCCOSH
Commissioner

DISABILITY COMMISSION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

Boston City Hall, Room 900, 9th Floor

Commission Members

Heather Watkins
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John Winske
Secretary

Zary Amirhosseini

Marc (Moses) Mallard

Carl Richardson

Kyle Robidoux

Ruben Roux

Thursday July 23rd, 2015
5:30-7:30 p.m.

- Call to Order
- Introductions
- Approval of Minutes
- Welcome New Board Member Kimyatta Campbell – *Kristen McCosh*
- Chair's Report – *Heather Watkins*
- Commissioner's Report – *Kristen McCosh*
- Architectural Access Update – *Kathryn Quigley*
- Boston Housing Authority Updates on Disabled Housing – *Mac McCreight*
- Old Business
- Old Action Items –
 - *Advisory Board Letter re. Sandwich Boards on Sidewalks*
- New Business –
 - *Potential Meeting on Disability Issues in Olympics*
- New Action Items
- Public Input
- Adjournment

Next meeting: August 27th, 5:30-7:30pm

MEETING ACCOMMODATION NOTICE

All meetings held by the City of Boston are required to be accessible for persons with disabilities under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Accommodations are available upon request to any person who requires alternately formatted materials, auxiliary aids, or another accommodation to ensure effective communication and access to attend meetings held by City departments and programs.

Please allow at least 2 weeks to arrange for accommodations. Requests for accommodations may be sent to the contact person for the meeting, or may be forwarded to: Kristen McCosh, City of Boston Disability Commissioner and ADA Coordinator, at kristen.mccosh@cityofboston.gov or 617-635-3682 (voice) or 617-635-2541 (TTY).

To participate in this meeting by phone please dial:

Conference Phone Number: 1-888-322-7166

Participant Code: 4074173#