

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



KRISTEN MCCOSH
Commissioner

Commission Members

Zary Amirhosseini

Feleshia Battles-Byrdsong

Jerry Boyd

Eugene Gloss

Dusya Lyubovskaya

Carl Richardson

Kyle Robidoux

John Winske

Minutes for Monday, October 23rd, 2017
9th Floor BRA Board Room 900, Boston City Hall, 5:30 – 7:30 PM

Present:	Staff Present:
(ZA) Zary Amirhosseini (FB) Feleshia Battles-Byrdsong (JB) Jerry Boyd (DL) Dusya Lyubovskaya (CR) Carl Richardson (KR) Kyle Robidoux Not Present: (EG) Eugene Gloss (JW) John Winske	(KMC) Kristen McCosh, Commissioner (JC) Jaymi Cohen (SL) Sarah Leung (PM) Patricia Mendez (WP) Winston Pierre
Guests: Mara Bresnahan and Jaymie Saks, ReelAbilities/Jewish Film Festival Andrea Bailey, Uber	

September Meeting Minutes: A motion was made to approve the September meeting minutes by Jerry Boyd (JB), then seconded by Feleshia Battles-Byrdsong (FB). They were then unanimously approved by all present.

ReelAbilities/Jewish Film Festival: Jaymie Saks, Executive Director; Mara Bresnahan, Program Manager: Mara Bresnahan (MB) and Jaymie Saks (JS) gave a presentation on the work of ReelAbilities and the Jewish Film Festival. They would appreciate the Board's help and outreach in the city of Boston to increase awareness about the festival. They began by showing the trailers for two films that they showed last year, "Life, Animated" and "Rebound". "Life Animated" is about a father who learns how to connect and communicate with his son who has Autism, through Disney animated films. "Rebound" is about a wheelchair basketball team from Miami.

JS informed the Board that the Jewish Film Festival is in its 29th year. They have always wanted to do a disability festival and 7 years ago, in 2011, they had the opportunity to bring ReelAbilities to Boston. The 2018 festival will take place from March 21st - 29th at 12-15 different accessible venues. JS described the types of films they screen, which include films about Intellectual Disabilities, Physical Disabilities, the Autism Spectrum, and Mental Health. The mission of the festival is to show and celebrate the accomplishments and the lives of people with disabilities. JS offered her own personal experience, stating that she did not grow up exposed to many people with disabilities and this film festival changed her perception on the abilities of people with disabilities.

JS described the venues that they use for the festival. JS stated that they have learned a lot and now understand the importance of choosing venues that have accessible seating for many wheelchair users, as well as closed captioning. MB stated they are currently looking for venue suggestions as well as partnership and fundraising ideas throughout the City of Boston to expand the festival. She then discussed their advisory board which meets twice a year. The advisory board watches the various films and explores options for different speakers and what the discussion will entail after each film.

MB discussed the success of the festival last year and asked for ideas for this year. FB asked which venues they have used so far, which have included the Museum of Science, the Cotting School in Lexington, the Somerville Theater in Davis Square, the MFA, and the Brattle Theater in Cambridge.

MB said they are partnering with Lesley University this year and FB, KMC, DL, and CR suggested exploring options at BU and Northeastern. Public input included suggestions on using the Ivory School and BU.

Andrea Bailey, Uber:

Andrea Bailey (AB) provided updates on Uber's para-transit pilot program in partnership with the MBTA. They are one year into the program and over the summer they added 11 wheel-chair accessible vehicles to the program. Anyone can access the pilot program by going online, and currently 500 people are enrolled in the program. CR asked about the duration of the program and AB stated that although the contract is expiring on December 1st, they are hoping to continue it; they are waiting for the RFP from the MBTA to renew the contract. CR also asked why certain people get more rides than others. AB informed the Board that the RIDE and MBTA numbers and ID's inform the number of trips.

JB stated his frustration in participating in the pilot program, and he asked about the demand numbers of the program. AB answered by saying that the program does a couple dozen trips per week. They are also exploring other partnerships to use more wheelchair accessible vehicles in the program. DL asked about the fees for the rides, to which AB stated that an UberPool costs \$1.00 or \$2.00 for an UberX ride. The MBTA pays the rest of the fare which was between \$13-14 and they are increasing the subsidy to \$40 to see if it would encourage people to take longer trips.

FB asked about advertisements and AB answered that they do not want to advertise too much before the terms are renewed. KMC brought up tracking the number of wheelchair rides. She also informed the Board that there is discussion about WAV cars partnering with Uber. AB and KMC discussed the training that drivers receive in order to be involved in this program. DL and CR discussed taking rides outside of the designated area, such as going to Worcester, and AB said that she will work on it.

Commissioner's Report: Kristen McCosh

KMC began her report by discussing how October is National Disability Employment Month. She also reminded the Board about our upcoming events, including Disability Mentoring Day and Civic Engagement Day. KMC gave an overview of an event held by the British Consulate in Cambridge, which discussed ways to increase inclusion in the workforce. KMC served on the panel discussing the importance of hiring people with disabilities. She discussed the updated brochure for accessible taxis. KMC then discussed the Disability Housing Tax Force which meets monthly to discuss increasing the supply of housing and supporting people who have recently gained housing. They developed a comprehensive guide with local and regional contacts and resources for housing. KMC also outlined the BPDA's pilot program for Accessible Dwelling Units, which provide separate units to house people who otherwise might need to go to a nursing home or become homeless. The program is piloting in Mattapan, East Boston, and Jamaica Plain. Internally, two processes have changed, including keeping names in a long-term applicant pool for next year's lottery and offering guidance to management companies and BPDA on applications where somebody has requested an accommodation to look at special needs trust and medical documentation. KMC's final update regards the ADA Municipal Grant application for City Hall accessibility updates.

FB asked a question regarding the rent for housing, and KMC discussed that Mayor Walsh introduced the Office of Housing Stability which offers case management on this issue.

Architectural Access Update: Patricia Mendez

Patricia Mendez (PM) provided an update on the Public Improvement Commission (PIC), including a project at South Station to improve and reconstruct sidewalks and seating at 700 Atlantic Avenue. In the future, they are hoping to enhance pedestrian connectivity by providing more sidewalks and crossing. The BPDA attended a meeting to discuss an Air Rights project on a mixed-use tall tower in the Back Bay. Serving on the Architectural Access Board, PM informed the Board that UMass Amherst is drafting a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to list the accessible dorms on the entire campus. PM described another project at Emerson's Colonial Theater Renovation, including new wheelchair spaces in the audience and a ramp providing access to the stage. Lastly, PM reported that the Senate Bill 1279, An Act Relative to the Architectural Access Board, which gets rid of an employment loophole, was referred to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means. CR suggested that this happened last year as well. KMC added that the project in South Station is a huge development and they are looking into expanding South Station. KMC also discussed HubWeek and the Commission's work to mitigate the accessibility barriers they found during a walk-through. She added that the Commission will work with the Winter Wonderland Event in early stages this year.

Outreach Update: Winston Pierre

Winston Pierre (WP) gave an update on the Accessibility Survey, which still has 200 respondents. He is hoping to reach 500 people. WP strongly encouraged the Board members to share the survey with their respective networks. He also provided a detailed description of Civic Engagement Day and the importance of breaking barriers to getting involved in local government. Lastly, he discussed the importance of reaching out to college campuses and youth to be more civically engaged.

Elections Discussion: Kristen McCosh

KMC discussed the upcoming schedule and informed the Board that the next and last meeting of 2017 will be Monday, December 11th. Therefore, the Board agreed to delay elections until January since there are various applications to sift through. KMC encouraged Board members to consider nominating others or nominating themselves for a position.

Old Business

KMC gave an update on the Boston Public Library ramp. She met with the library President and spoke with the Construction Department at City Hall. The library president sees this situation as an issue of equity and wants to request funding to look at a longer-term study to make a historically acceptable, permanent ramp at the front entrance. For the short-term, KMC discussed the issue of protocol. KMC will reach out to the Landmarks Commission to discuss how to get the removable ramp up for the short term. CR suggested a letter of support from the Disability Commission. FB made a motion to write a letter of support for the ramp. JB seconded the motion and all unanimously agreed.

New Business

No new business at this time.

Action Item

KMC will look into having the projects at South Station come present to the Board after the first of the year.
KMC will work with the Landmarks Commission to discuss a short-term plan for a ramp at Boston Public Library.
JD will work with CR to draft a letter of support for a short-term solution for a ramp at Boston Public Library

Public Input

David Viera from Hyde Park thanked KMC to get the ramp put up and the Board for the vote they took. He discussed the importance of having a ramp at BPL for people to vote to Election Day.

Constituent discussed a children's book she wrote about grit. She invited the Board to her book signing at the Harvard Coop on Saturday, November 4th.

KMC introduced Jaymi Cohen (JC), the new Constituent Services Specialist. JC introduced herself and KMC concluded by saying that the Commission is now fully staffed.