



Boston Disability Commission Advisory Board

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Minutes for Thursday, March 1st, 2018
 9th Floor BRA Board Room 900, Boston City Hall, 5:30 – 7:30 PM

KRISTEN MCCOSH
 Commissioner

Commission Members

Zary Amirhosseini

Feleshia Battles-Byrdsong

Jerry Boyd

Eugene Gloss

Dusya Lyubovskaya

Carl Richardson

Kyle Robidoux

John Winske

Present:	Staff Present:
(FB) Feleshia Battles-Byrdsong (CR) Carl Richardson (JB) Jerry Boyd (KR) Kyle Robidoux (DL) Dusya Lyubovskaya Phone: (EG) Eugene Gloss (ZA) Zary Amirhosseini Not Present: (JW) John Winske	(KMC) Kristen McCosh, Commissioner (PM) Patricia Mendez (WP) Winston Pierre (JC) Jaymi Cohen (JD) Jessica Doonan (CM) Chris Morawksi (SL) Sarah Leung
Guests: Carol Leon, Mayor's Office for Immigrant Advancement; Dana Nye, MBTA	

January Meeting Minutes: An amendment was made to add more detail to the January minutes regarding the cost of the Uber Pilot program. A motion was made to approve the January meeting minutes by Kyle Robidoux then seconded by Feleshia Battles-Byrdsong. They were then unanimously approved by all present.

Mayor's Office for Immigrant Advancement: Carol Leon

Carol Leon (CL) does outreach and engagement for the Mayor's Office for Immigrant Advancement (MOIA), and she presented information about the mission and work of their office. MOIA was founded in 1998, known as the Office of New Bostonians, and they went through a re-branding process in 2016 to make sure that the work they do is reflected in the name of their office. The mission of the office is to ensure that immigrants are integrated into the civic, economic, and social life of the City of Boston, as well as for all city departments to include immigrant communities in their outreach efforts and programs and services.

CL described MOIA's immigration clinic which started in 2001, which consists of volunteer attorneys coming to City Hall and providing free one-on-one, confidential consultation. This helps to ensure that immigrants receive information from a licensed immigrant attorney and helps combat the issue of fraudulent attorneys who might unlawfully practice immigration law. The free consultation services happen on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of the month.

On March 24th, MOIA is partnering with Centro Presente, based in East Boston, to organize a larger scale clinic to provide assistance to immigrants that have Temporary Protected Status (TPS). The purpose of these clinics is to inform immigrants that they might be eligible for other visas to stay in this country. The three largest immigrant communities in Boston are people from China, Dominican Republic, and Haiti. They are currently working with a partnership with community leaders in the Haitian community to organize a clinic.

The other work that MOIA works on is the immigrant integration work to ensure that immigrants have access to city services. An example of this integration agenda was a mailer that went out about early voting that was translated into various languages. In terms of policy, The Trust Act is a resolution passed by the City Council that improves trust

between the immigrant community and the Boston Police Department. She said she will give Jessica follow-up information if people are interested. Lastly, she said you can always refer any immigrants to their office. While MOIA may not have the capacity to help every individual, they do have the capacity to direct people in the right direction, especially with their varied language capacity.

DL thanked CL for what she does and asked about the word “advancement” in the title of their office. CL said MOIA worked with a consulting firm to do the re-branding work of their office. She said their office is unique since they work with immigrants within a municipality. MOIA wants to make sure they give immigrants the tools to achieve their goals succeed, rather than simply focusing on immigrant affairs. DL asked about the process of calling 311 for someone who speaks ASL, and CL said if a deaf constituent needs ASL assistance, they should call beforehand to request the accommodation. JD said that MOIA has hired certified ASL interpreters in the past when they have advanced notice.

Elizabeth Dean-Clower (ED) raised concerns about families from other countries who speak different languages and how to navigate the Special Education process and services in regards to Individualized Education Plans (IEP). She asked CL if MOIA is doing anything to address this issue. CL said she will work with the Commission and BPS on this.

MBTA Transit Update: Dana Nye

Officer Dana Nye (DN) does community outreach for the Transit Police department, and she spoke about the MBTA’s SeeSay app, which allows you to report suspicious and criminal activities to transit police. On this app, anyone is able to take a photo and send it along with a location, report type, and explanation of the photo to the desk of a police dispatcher. She discussed the time saving quality and sense of anonymity of using this app, since it goes directly to the dispatcher, rather than calling 911 which either goes to the state or city police department.

DN also spoke about using this app to prevent terrorism and the differences between an unattended and suspicious package. Unlike an unattended package, a suspicious package might be ticking, leaking, have wires hanging out, or be in a suspicious location. She talked about “See Something, Say Something” and said they bring this information to schools to teach kids about it as well. They also do inspections and said they do not check bags; rather, they inspect the outside of the bag looking for traces of certain materials. DN offered the example of the Boston Marathon Bombers and how having an app like this and inspecting the outside of the bags may have prevented the situation because they used the T for transportation. Finally, the app has several other features including general safety information, emergency instructions, what to do if you get a ticket, and how to reach the MBTA Transit Police.

CR asked if the app is available for download now and DN said it is. CR asked if they did user testing with voice-over and talk back and DN said she does not know the testing process. Jerry Boyd (JB) asked how we would find out how accessible the app actually is and DN said they will check with their accessibility office. Olivia Richards (OR) said she used the SeeSay app when she was attacked on the Orange Line and knows that it is compatible with voice-over but she does not know about talk back on google.

Chair’s Report: Carl Richardson

Carl Richardson (CR) began by stating the success of the Mayor’s event this past Monday night. He also provided dates for several upcoming advocacy days at the state house:

- March 7th- Developmental Disability Council
- March 8th- Deaf and Hard of Hearing Constituent Day
- March 13th- Blind Legislative Information Networking Day
- March 16th- Ways and Means Hearing, Gardner Auditorium, 10 AM
- March 29th- Deaf Blind Awareness Day

Commissioner’s Report: Kristen McCosh

Jessica Doonan (JD) gave the Commissioner’s report. JD spoke about the three ASL Tax Days, which happen in partnership with the Tax Help Coalition and Deaf, Inc. Last week they utilized the help of 4 financial advisors and a team

of ASL interpreters, and the two other ASL tax days will take place on March 17th and April 7th. The purpose of these tax days is to increase financial empowerment of the deaf community. JD also discussed the Commission's upcoming events, including a Transportation Summit which will take place on March 27th from 2-4 pm in the Boston Public Library, the Community Forum which will take place on May 23rd from 1-4 pm in the Boston Public Library, and ADA Day. JD informed the board that the Commission will also have upcoming staff trainings and they will continue to interview for open board seats. Lastly, JD discussed the Language and Communication Access Ordinance, which the Mayor signed 2 years ago. This requires each department to come up with a language access plan of spoken language, ASL, CART, and online accessible formats. Manar is the language access coordinator for the City.

Architectural Access Update: Patricia Mendez

Patricia Mendez (PM) provided the architectural access update for the board. First, she mentioned that the Commission on Disabilities Alliance (CODA) is planning to co-host a training on "How to Review Variance Applications" on May 18th at Boston City Hall. A variance is special permission to not comply with the regulations of the Massachusetts Architectural Access Regulations. Tom Hopkins, the executive director of the Architectural Access Board, will lead the training, and she will follow up with invitations to the event.

PM then discussed the City Hall Plaza Events Information meeting that took place on February 21st. The Boston Fire Department and City of Boston Property Management Department had a meeting with organizations about early and accurate communication about details of each plaza event to ensure accessibility and safety for all visitors. Items discussed included accessible pedestrian entrances, way finding, accessible restrooms, event website information, and mitigation of existing steps and other challenges of the site. Future events include the circus, Hubweek, and other festivals.

The Public Improvement Commission discussed proposed sidewalk renovations at 500 Boylston Street/22 Berkeley Street. Next, there is a pilot for the Boston City Hall Offices to slightly reconfigure transaction windows at the walk-in parking clerk offices. The pilot includes changes in lighting, the height of the window, legibility of signs, and wayfinding. Lastly, PM discussed information from the Emergency Flood Mitigation Meeting that happened on 2/22/18. Public Works, the Boston Fire Department, and Office of Emergency Management and Inspectional Services Department discussed the pilot of Aqua Fence in preparation for future emergency flood events.

JB asked when the events are starting and PM said the Spring season is very soon. FB asked specifically when the CODA event will take place and PM answered that it will take place on May 18th in the Piemonte Room from 1:30 – 4:30 pm.

Old Business

CR said that the board will hold off on elections until they are fully staffed with newly appointed board members. He also suggested the possibility of a board retreat so that members can learn about their roles and get to know each other better.

New Business

No new business at this time.

Action Item

No new action items at this time.

Public Input

Katherine Gallegher (KG) spoke about her concerns with secondhand smoke. Less than six weeks ago, KG found out that she has fluid in her lung. She is wondering where her protections are since the quality of air has not been checked and the man who smokes has a 10 month period to quit. FB told KG to get in touch with the Inspectional Service Department and the Boston Public Health Commission.

Maggie Austen confirmed that she is attending the board meeting as a resident of Boston, and not as a representative of

IHCD. She expressed concerns about intersections and illegally parked vehicles blocking crosswalks. She asked for an increase in audible pedestrian signals, especially on Congress Street, and increase in enforcement to make sure vehicles are 20 feet from intersections, and improvements in future designs of intersections. She also presented a letter and will send a digital copy to the board.

Charles, a resident of Brookline, expressed his concerns about Accessible Parking Spaces that are not near curb cuts. Locations of concern include the Allston Diner and the Allston/Brighton branch of the Boston Public Library.

Elizabeth Dean-Clower (ED) expressed concerns about automatic door buttons. PM encouraged her to file a complaint and she will follow-up with her.

Michelle Jenkins, mother of Bryce Jenkins, spoke about her nonprofit, Bryce's Journey, which seeks to improve social skills for kids with Autism Spectrum Disorder. They are holding their first event on March 9th at the Codman Square Health Center. FB encouraged MJ to look into the National Autism Foundation, Tufts and BlueCross Blue Shield, and Children's Hospital. DL encouraged her to look into the Asperger/Autism Network (AANE) in Watertown which also hosts social skills groups.

Adjournment

KR made a motion to adjourn and FB seconded. All Board members agreed to adjourn.

Next meeting: Monday, March 26th, 2018 5:30-7:30 pm