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City of Melrose Commission on Disability
Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: 12-13-2021

Commissioners Present:
Garin Boyd
Karen Burke
David Hoff
Erin Heyneman
Judy Bushee
Margaret Sheets
Paula Weiner

Commissioners Absent:
none

1. **Call to Order**

Commission Chair Hoff called to order the regular meeting of the Commission on Disability at 6:08PM.

2. Approval of minutes from last meeting

A motion to approve the minutes from the November 8, 2021 meeting was made by Commissioner Sheets and second by Commissioner Weiner. Passed unanimously.

3. Public Participation

- Email from Katy Kennnedy (attached)
- Meghan McDonough comments regarding South Main reconfiguration. Residents petitioned for a hearing: 11/29 was hearing. Goal was to deal with parking. Fair hearing from traffic commission - voted to remove parking. Question about discrimination. Mayor phone call - wants to have disabled member on traffic commission. Calls in to DPW. Questions about ramps. Email for group: lowermainstreetneighbors@gmail.com
- Palla Byrd - Lower Main Street Group had a question about snow angel program. Snow Angels program snow was noted as a resource for Melrose residents with disabilities who can't clear their sidewalks and driveways. Main Street southbound - the city

snowblows the sidewalk, but not the northbound side. Possible address when Chair meets with Mayor.

- Finn McSweeney from the Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee noted that the sidewalk plows are for schools walking paths only

4. **CODA update** - Other commissions are preparing to deal with issues regarding snow removal and accessibility.
5. **SEPAC update** – a) Commission on Disability has been invited to attend the meeting on 2/27 and we are all encouraged to attend. b) Gather all facts and costs regarding two disability awareness programs for schools. Paula Weiner and Erin Heyneman want to get on to the agenda for next month
6. **South Main Street Reconfiguration update** - Heard from resident Palla about a dip in one of the curb cuts
7. **Web page and social media update** – a) Still waiting from city regarding Facebook access and Twitter account. b) Commissioner Hoff will follow up regarding logo design. c) Add to agenda for next meeting regarding procedures for getting content posted.
8. **Universal Access Playground Update** – 1 parking spot next to the playground is current a bus stop. Need to figure out how many handicapped parking spots are needed.
9. **MOD Grant Update** - David is waiting to hear back
10. **ADA Coordinator Position** - Jeff Dougan from MA Office on Disability emailed information regarding ADA Coordinator role. Paul Johnson, Director of Inspectional Services and Building Commissioner, is designated as the city's current ADA coordinator, but it is unclear whether he has sufficient time for the role. It was suggested that the commission advocate to the city for a part time ADA coordinator. Motion for chair to draft letter. Motion made by Commissioner Sheets seconded by Commissioner Boyd. Passed unanimously.
11. **Work Plan Update, discussion, next steps:** Commissioners Sheets and Hoff will work on language for accessibility requirements for meetings. Commissioner Weiner will work on language for the survey. Commissioners Heyneman, Bushee, and Boyd will work on survey ideas, to be shared at next meeting.

12. Other Business

- Still waiting to hear about the procedures for the commission being contacted regarding property variances.
- Voting accessibility – Commissioner Heyneman will look through the planning docs for voting.
- Bitty and Beau's - limited in their business plan who they can affiliate with. Commissioner Sheets noted our disappointment not being able to partner.
- Payment to Commissioner Burker for cost of banner for $65: motion made by Commissioner Sheets, cost of banner for $65 seconded by Commissioner Boyd. Passed unanimously.

- Motion to approve payment of $35.80 to Commissioner Hoff for cost of flyers: Motion Made by Commissioner Sheets seconded by Commissioner Weiner. Passed unanimously.
- Request from Disabled Persons Protections Commission - want to collaborate and come to future meeting.
- It was suggested that the Commission a hot line on our web page. Difference with Mystic Valley Elder Services.
- The city is receiving $8 million in ARPA money. It was suggested reaching out to the Mayor about using this money for accessibility. Consider using money for community survey.

14. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by Commissioner Weiner, seconded by Commissioner Burke. Passed Unanimously.
Meeting was adjourned at 7:59PM.

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Commission on Disability is January 10, 2021, 6:00 PM.

Meeting minutes submitted by Erin Heyneman, Commission Secretary.

Public Comment for 12-13-2021 Meeting

Katy Kennedy Mon 12/13/2021 10:48 AM

To:Melrose Commission on Disability <commissionondisability@CityofMelrose.org>;

Melrose Commission on Disability Meeting

I want to thank you in advance for accepting my comments related to the agenda for your 12-13-2021 meeting. I hope that Chair, David Hoff can read them out loud during Public Comment and then enter them into the Public Record.

I appreciate the details of your agendas published on the City Calendar and how The Commission on Disabilities approved meeting minutes are posted regularly and promptly. This enables people to understand your work especially when meetings are held virtually.

I want to comment on the agenda item related to the Lower Main Street Reconfiguration Project. I have copied my previous submissions to sharedstreets@cityofmelrose.org and to the Traffic Commission and sent them to you. My concerns center on the safety issues of the design and the lack of contact and consultation there was with Main Street Corridor residents. As in the case with most neighborhoods in Melrose, we are a mix of many different age groups and years lived in the area. The changes voted on by the Traffic Commission did not prioritize the safety needs of the neighborhood or address safety issues that have been brought forward for years.

Lower Main Street residents include many elderly citizens and people who live with chronic health challenges and disabilities. Some homeowners parking was taken away. This action is burdensome, real and will make lives much more difficult for those individuals who live on Main Street. I will not repeat the issues I have detailed before. But, I sincerely hope that a greater sensitivity and a willingness to listen by City officials replaces the attitude of “nothing will change” no matter what was said or highlighted.

My point is to emphasize that I believe The Commission on Disabilities should have a formal and sanctioned role on The Traffic Commission and any Safe Streets initiatives. Evaluation and planning processes by the Planning Department and Traffic Commission would benefit everyone by the perspective of seeing through the lens of the what the disabled community members need and support. Any future Pedestrian Bike Committee/DPW planning and/or proposed changes by the Traffic Commission, should automatically have input from and collaboration with the Disabilities Commission. The Melrose Commission on Disabilities should be formal and sanctioned members of the Traffic Commission and have full voting rights.

I also saw this evening that the topic of hiring an ADA Coordinator will be discussed. I urge your group to lobby City Officials to to hire someone ASAP. Your work on behalf of Melrose residents who live with disabilities needs a professional advisor. This goal of hiring an ADA Coordinator should be a top priority for the current administration. Particularly in light of what happened on Lower Main Street, the professional need for someone with a Disability background is paramount to traffic and planning processes. Hopefully, State monies or grants may be available. Our State House delegation should be contacted and may be able to guide you.

Some additional thoughts I had related to The Commission on Disabilities:

1. Contact Representative Kate Lipper-Garabedian about being a guest on one of her podcasts. It could be a great opportunity to introduce yourselves, discuss the work of the Commission to date and your vision for the future.

1. Perhaps sponsor a "Letters Project from The Melrose Community". Letters could sent to your Commission signed or anonymously. This would be an opportunity to share as much or as little about living with a specific challenge as someone wants the rest of us to know. It could be an opportunity to educate the larger community as well as show the courage and resiliency of those who live with complicated and ongoing disabilities. Story telling can be very healing. The NY Times Disability Articles archive and The Health Story Collaborative based at MGH (which I have been involved with) are possible models that might shape how The Melrose Commission on Disabilities Project might approach this idea. Some of the letters could be read out loud at an event or combined in a published booklet (cover illustrated by Commissioner, Garin Boyd).

I have also read in your meeting minutes that you are thinking about a logo and survey. "One Community Open to All" has been used by many groups. I hope that the Disability Commission comes up with something new/different that represents a communities you are often invisible to others.

I recently saw an interview on TV with Rebecca Coakley, disability Rights Officer for The Ford Foundation. This past fall, the Ford Foundation began a Ford Foundation Disability Grants Program. Statistics she shared struck me and have stuck with me. They certainly were in my mind when I asked for dialogue and meeting with Melrose officials regarding The Lower Main Street project.

1 in 5 Americans have a disability.
1/3 of Americans live with invisible disabilities.

"People with disabilities live in 1/3 of American households
If it is not someone in your own residence who lives with disabilities, it is your neighbor to the right or the neighbor to the left or both. Tangible results are not about charity or inspiration. Tangible results are about justice and safety", Rebecca Coakley, Disability Rights Officer, Ford Foundation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Katy Kennedy 781-665-7938
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Melrose, Ma

Sent from my iPad