



City of Melrose Commission on Disability Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: January 9, 2023

Commissioners Present:

Garin Boyd
Alaine Breen
David Hoff
Margaret Sheets
Judy Bushee

Commissioners Absent:

Erin Heyneman

1. Call to Order

Commission Chair Hoff called to order the regular meeting of the Commission on Disability at 6:03 PM.

2. Approval of December 12, 2022 minutes

A motion to approve the minutes from the December 12th 2022 meeting was made by Commissioner Bushee and seconded by Commissioner Boyd. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Public Participation

- An audience member said that there is a Northeast Metro Tech School Committee meeting is on January 12th. As the meeting isn't accessible remotely, the audience member filed a complaint about the fact that they weren't allowed to film the meeting. The audience member has been working with the Committee to influence them to allow remote access to their meetings and encouraged the Commission on Disability members to attend the aforementioned meeting regarding the issues of accessibility with the design of the the new NEMT building. .

4. CODA/MOD/State issue update

No CODA meeting was held this month. Commission Chair Hoff noted that it is possible that there may be some changes in state-level disability commissioners as Massachusetts has a new governor.

5. Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan update

- Commissioner Hoff sent comments made at the Commissions 12/28 meeting to IHCD and is waiting to hear back from IHCD about how the report should be presented to the public, city entities and other stakeholders.

- Commissioner Hoff assured audience member that the report will be shared at a city council meeting and posted on the city's website.
- Strategies for publicizing the report were identified. These included;
 - After the report is finalized, presenting to the City Council as well as the School Committee as a lot of the needed changes cited in the report concerned Melrose's school buildings.
 - Having a discussion on "Let's Talk Melrose", a Facebook show at 8:30 each Tuesday. Commissioner Boyd will follow up.
 - Sending to Melrose's state representative.
 - Sending to the Melrose Council on Aging and Milano Center
 - Sharing on the Commission's Facebook page and Twitter feed.
 - Discussing at the Commission's event on the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service in Melrose.
- The Commission will send out a press release about the report upon its release. This press release is to be sent to Melrose's local newspapers.

6. SEPAC update

- Noreen Donovan from the SEPAC described how the Office of Public School Monitoring is going to be doing a tier focused monitoring regarding civil rights compliance. This occurs every 3 years. A parent orientation will be held this month regarding this topic.
- An online survey is being conducted regarding special education experience to identify trends.
- The school has an upcoming executive functioning series; dates and times will be forthcoming.
- Noreen Donovan will report back on staffing issues in the Melrose school district.

7. School Committee Special Education Presentation

- Commissioner Hoff discussed the December School Committee presentation on Special Education. He expressed concerns that the presentation provided a good discussion of efforts being undertaken for students with disabilities, but did not directly address some of the concerns that have been raised by parents.
- There was a lot of discussion about out-of-district placements in terms of numbers and costs but there were no strategies shared during the presentation or questions from school committee members on how to reduce the number of students being placed out of district. Commissioner Hoff will attend and speak on this issue during the public comment period at the 1/10/23 School Committee meeting.

8. MLK Day of Service

- Commissioner Boyd has arranged for Commission members to speak on a panel at Melrose's Unitarian Universalist Church as part of their MLK Day event on January 16th.
- Commission members will speak on education, employment and their experiences as people with disabilities or as a parent of a child with a disability,
- Commissioners Boyd, Breen, Sheets and Heyneman will speak on the panel and answer questions from the audience.

9. Vo-Tech School construction issues update

- Commissioner Hoff sent a letter to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) regarding our Commission's accessibility concerns regarding plans for the NEMT (Vo-Tech) construction. MSBA acknowledged they got the letter.
- Commissioner Hoff noted that the NEMT School Committee meetings are on the second Thursday in Wakefield, and encouraged commissioners to consider attending upcoming meetings. Advocates are continuing to work to get disability commissions to send letters and spread the word and attend Vo-Tech School Committee meetings.
- Construction of the school is slated to begin on 3/2/23.

10. Social Media status

- Commissioner Boyd put together a job description for an internship to handle the commission's social media activities and he shared the draft.
- Commissioner Heyneman indicated they could supervise the internship.
- Possible recruitment methods include: reaching out to SEPAC, the High School's Special Education Coordinator.
- The complexities of offering a stipend for the internship were discussed.
- Establishing the internship as volunteer position was discussed since the high school has a volunteer requirement.
- There was discussion regarding hours the intern would work, questions around supervision and approval process to vet social media posts created by an intern.
- Commissioner Boyd plans to revise the job description based on our feedback.

11. Community Awareness/ Education Toolkit initiative update

Commissioners Hoff and Sheets will meet to discuss the development of the community education toolkit and report back to the Commission about next steps.

12. Other Business

- Commissioners Sheets, Boyd and Hoff paperwork for appointment to addition 3-year terms has been submitted. Officer elections will happen during the March meeting.
- Commissioner Boyd is continuing to work on arranging a storytelling event for June.

13. Adjournment

This meeting was adjourned at 7:00PM. The motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Sheets, seconded by Commissioner Boyd and passed unanimously.

Meeting minutes were submitted by Maggie Sheets, Commission Secretary.