

City of Melrose Commission on Disability Meeting Minutes



Meeting Date: March 21, 2023

Commissioners Present:

Garin Boyd
Karen Burke
David Hoff
Margaret Sheets
Judy Bushee
Erin Heyneman

Commissioners Absent:

1. Call to Order

Commission Chair Hoff called to order the regular meeting of the Commission on Disability at 6:10 PM.

2. Approval of minutes

- a. A motion to approve the 2-13-23 minutes was made by Commissioner Bushee and seconded by Commissioner Boyd. Approved unanimously
- b. A motion to approved the 2-15-23 minutes was made by Commissioner Breen and seconded by Commissioner Boyd. Approved unanimously.

3. Public Participation

- a) A parent of children with ADHD in the Melrose Public Schools suggested having student representatives on the Commission on Disability. The parent also noted the difficulty of her children in making friends, and would like to have a school based or community based board to provide education on disabilities. It was noted that the Melrose Alliance Against Violence has a similar group. The parent also noted that her child is transition to adulthood, and there is a need for resources and guidance on identifying transition services.
- b) A member of the public noted the need for distinction between supports for neurodivergent individuals.
- c) Gary Hale, a retired member of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission who lives in Melrose, introduced himself and offered to assist the commission in its work.
- d) Three members of the public commented on the proposed new Northeast Metro Tech building issues.
 - One individual noted that the proposed ramp for building access is now 800 to 1,100 feet long. There is a Wakefield Zoning Board of Appeals meeting on Wednesday at 7:00 to discuss the driveway that is going through wetlands.
 - One individual noted the recent discrimination lawsuit filed against vocational schools in Massachusetts, and that the issues regarding accessibility at the proposed new building are another example of discrimination.

- One individual expressed concern about the lack of recognition by the public regarding the costs of the proposed new building.

4. Special Education Parents Advisory Council (SEPAC) Update

SEPAC representative Noreen Donovan provided an update.

- a) School superintendent finalists are being interviewed; the SEPAC has crafted questions for the search committee on mental health, staffing shortages in special education, and managing growing special education costs.
 - b) The next SEPAC meeting is Monday 3/27 in the Learning Commons at the High School at 7:00 PM. It will be an open forum.
 - c) There is a talk for the SEPAC on 4/24 on using neurodiverse affirming language in IEPs.
- This update was followed by a discussion regarding the growing costs of out-of-district placements.

5. Follow Your Art Story Telling Event

Kris Rodolico of *Follow Your Art* discussed with the commission the planned story telling event, to be held June 10th at Temple Beth Shalom. The goal of these events is to amplify voices from marginalized groups, and would like this year to focus on people with disabilities. There will a call for individuals who wish to speak, who will then be connected to coaches to help them prepare. The goal is to have 8 storytellers who represent a diversity of disabilities. Erin Heyneman, Garin Boyd, and Alaine Breen will work with *Follow Your Art* to plan the event.

6. Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan Update

The deadline for public comments on the *Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan* was February 24th. Commission Chair David Hoff will summarize the comments, and provide them to the Institute for Human Centered Design (IHCD). Plans will be made to have IHCD present the plan to the City Council in conjunction with the commission, followed by a presentation to the School Committee.

7. Community Health Inclusion Project

Commissioner Boyd reported on the project with the City's Prevention and Wellness Coordinator, Kara Showers. Melrose is part of a mini -grant of \$25,000 that was awarded to area communities to increase accessibility for events/services to increase public health (e.g., farmer's market), and plans are underway for implementation. The Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan was shared with the group, and it was seen as a real asset to the project.

8. Variance for Melrose Family YMCA

The commission reviewed the variance application by the Family YMCA building at 497 Main Street, regarding a variety of items pertaining to the building renovations, and requests for waiver of accessibility requirements which are not seen as readily achievable. Commission Chair Hoff will send a letter summarizing the commission's feedback and request a tour of the building to better understand the variance requests.

9. Bitty & Beau's Closing

The closing of Bitty & Beau's coffee shop was noted. The commission discussed the need to promote employment opportunities for youth and adults with disabilities at Melrose businesses, which is part of

the commission's strategic plan. Commissioner Heyneman volunteered to follow up with the Chamber of Commerce, and Commissioner Breen volunteered to follow up with the mayor on this issue.

10. Northeast Metro Tech Building Issue

A meeting was held on March 6th, hosted by the Wakefield Disability Commission, to discuss the accessibility concerns over the new Northeast Metro Tech building in Wakefield. Area disability commissions were invited to attend, and Melrose was well-represented. It remains unclear if there will be any changes in the building design, to address the accessibility concerns.

11. Community Coalition of Melrose

Commission Chair Hoff will be attending the next meeting of the Community Coalition to make the coalition members more aware of the commission as a resource.

12. Communications Update

- a) Commission members met to develop the job description for the student intern to handle the commission's social media. It will be presented at the next meeting.
- b) There is a need to update the commission's web page. The Town of Sudbury commission's web page was noted as a good example to consider.

13. Commissioner Reappointments and Follow Up from City Training

Commission Chair David Hoff announced that his, Maggie Sheets, and Garin Boyd's reappointments to the commission for 3-year terms had been approved by the city council. The chair reminded commissioners that they need to take the state's conflict of interest training, if they have not taken it in the last two years.

14. Officer Elections

The following slate of officers was proposed for 1-year terms through March 2024: David Hoff, Chair; Garin Boyd, Vice Chair, Erin Heyneman Secretary. A motion for approval was made by Commissioner Bushee and seconded by Commissioner Breen. Approved unanimously.

15. City ADA Coordinator

The appointment of the city's new building inspector as the city's ADA Coordinator was noted. The commission will invite the building inspector to a future meeting.

16. Open City Position on Commission

The city official position on the commission remains open. Commission Chair Hoff will follow up with the mayor to see if any progress has been made on making the appointment.

17. Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 8:05. Motion was made by Commissioner Boyd, seconded by Commissioner Bushee. Passed unanimously.

Minutes submitted by Commission Chair David Hoff