City of Melrose Commission on Disability
Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: November 13, 2023

Commissioners Present:
Garin Boyd
Alaine Breen
Erin Heyneman
David Hoff
Margaret Sheets

Commissioners Absent: Judy Bushee

1. **Call to Order**

Commission Chair Hoff called to order the regular meeting of the Commission on Disability at 6:02PM.

2. Approval of minutes from last meeting

A motion to approve the minutes from the October 16th meeting was made by Commissioner Sheets and second by Commissioner Boyd. Passed unanimously.

3. Public Participation

- Jean - Formerly active with the disability commission in Wakefield. Concerned about snow removal and has reached out to many entities for assistance. Commissioner Heyneman suggested reaching out to interns at high school for ideas.
- Jennifer - Provided update on issues with new vo-tech school in Wakefield. Conversation Commission denied a permit, and that has been appealed to the state. Ongoing concerns with whether the school construction committee complied with the open meeting laws. This is being pursued. Have reached out to Boston Globe regarding issues. Concerns were expressed that lack of accessibility with new building will further increase the inequities in career and technical education, for which a federal civil rights complaint has already been filed: https://www.wbur.org/news/2023/02/02/admissions-policy-massachusetts-vocational-students-federal-civil-rights-complaint-marginalized-students

4. Special Education Parents Advisory Council (SEPAC) Update

Noreen Donovan provided the SEPAC update:

- There are 4 candidates for superintendent. The Co-chair of Sepac is part of superintendent search.
- Upcoming Meet and Greet at the Learning Commons at the High School (11/27). A board certified behavior therapist will attend. SEPAC members will speak about anxiety.

5. Lawrence ADA Coordinator

Richard Rodriquez, the ADA Coordinator for the City of Lawrence, was introduced. He discussed his role as ADA Coordinator.

6. Introduction to Social Media Interns

The high school students who will be serving as interns to assist the commission with social media were introduced.

7. Kara Showers Presentation

Kara Showers, City of Melrose Prevention and Wellness Coordinator was introduced. Ms. Showers provided a presentation of the Community Health Inclusion Index Project Summary, that was funded through a state grant to promote health among people with disabilities. Melrose worked on the project with Stoneham, and Lynnfield. For Melrose, the project included purchase of increased accessibility items for the Farmer's Market.

8. Senior Resource Fair

Commissioner Boyd staffed a table at the recent Senior Resource Fair and met the new head of the Council on Aging.

9. Community Education Guide

The initial draft of the community education guide was presented. This guide is intended to educate community groups on how to welcome and include people with disabilities. It is not intended as a legal guide. Commissioner's were asked to review the document, and it will be discussed at the next meeting. Guides of similar guides were shared with the committee, as examples for formatting.

10. Understanding Our Differences Funding

Commissioner Heyneman noted that 5 elementary schools have expressed interest in the Understanding Our Differences program. She will check on cost, and the commission will then determine if it can provided financial support.

11. ADA Coordinator Position

A meeting has been set with the Melrose ADA Coordinators for November 27th at 11AM. Commissioners Boyd, Breen, and Hoff will attend.

12. Playground Dedication

The dedication of the accessible playground on Warren Street is scheduled for Saturday November 18th at 10:00 AM. This is a joint event with the Parks Commission and Commission on Disability.

13. Disability Pride Event

Commissioner Sheets proposed having Disability Pride events this coming July. She will work on this with fellow commission members and members of the community Meghan McDonough and Christopher Robinson.

14. Vocational School Update

Megan McDonough provide a further update on the issues with new vo-tech school site in Wakefield.

15. Other Business: Visual Description Tour

Commissioner Boyd attended the visual description tour at Follow Your Art and shared a write up from Katy Kennedy. Chris Robinon from Follow Your Art shared that it was useful for people to understand how to give visual descriptions.

16. Other Business: Storytelling Night for April

Commissioner Boyd and Kris Rodolico of Follow Your Art are planning to extend an invitation to other communities for March / April.

17. Other Business: Snow Removal

Commission on Aging is no longer operating the snow angels program to coordinate volunteers for snow removal. Ideas suggested included:

- Reaching out to High School through interns
- Reach out to Faith communities
- Keep Melrose Beautiful infrastructure
- It was the consensus that the Commission on Disability is not in a position to coordinate volunteers for snow removal.

18. Adjournment

This meeting was adjourned at 8:06PM. The motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Sheets, seconded by Commissioner Boyd and passed unanimously.

Meeting minutes submitted by Erin Ryan Heyneman, Commission Secretary.