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City of Melrose Commission on Disability Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: 03/13/24

Commissioners Present:

Garin Boyd
David Hoff
Margaret Sheets
Gary Hale

Commissioners Absent:

Alaine Breen
Erin Heyneman

1. Call to Order

Commission Chair Hoff called to order the regular meeting of the Commission on Disability at 7:03PM.

2. Approval of minutes from last meeting

A motion to approve the minutes from the 01-08-2024 meeting was made by Commissioner Sheets, second by Commissioner Boyd and passed unanimously.

3. Public Participation

There was no public participation during this meeting.

4. Friends of the Fells

The representative from Friends of the Fells couldn't come to this month's meeting. They will come to our April meeting.

5. State updates

- The Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD) has a Disability Connections Networking Event on 4/10 at Suffolk University School of Law (Commissioner Hoff plans to attend).
- It's unclear whether Melrose got a Municipal ADA grant.
- There will be another round of municipal grants from the MOD, which the Commission will discuss and bring it to the city's attention.
- MOD also has an event on municipal accessibility improvements on 3/17 1PM-2PM.
- There's a Community Access Monitor 2-day training on 3/24 and 3/25 and 5/14 and 5/16, and 6/6 and 6/16, on how to make communities more accessible.

6. Update from the State Association of Disability Commissions meetings (CODA)

- CODA's latest meeting focused on a discussion of event planning and participants in the CODA meeting were excited to hear about the event planning guide that Melrose Commission on Disability is writing as Commissioner Boyd described to the CODA group how the guide will be complete and comprehensive. Members of the CODA meeting recommended looking at the state's guidelines for events. The Melrose Commission on Disability's accessibility guide will be disseminated to the members of the CODA group.
- The MOD's grant was also discussed at the CODA meeting as some cities hadn't received notice on the status of their grant applications.

7. High School intern update

- One of the high school students named Sarah who is interning with the Commission on disability attended this meeting.
- Sara has been working on the Snow Angels project where high school students volunteer to shovel snow for the elderly and people with disabilities.
- The Commission is very happy with what Sarah has accomplished.
- Sara said that she enjoys being an intern and has had a great experience.
- Sara is working with Commissioner Boyd and Commissioner Heyneman about introducing disability awareness in schools through storytelling.
- Commissioner Boyd took part in a Community Reading Day at Hoover Elementary School. He was able to read a book about accessibility called "We Move Together" to a third-grade class this morning which was exciting!

8. Disability Pride Event planning

- Commissioner Breen, Commissioner Heyneman, Commissioner Sheets. and Meghan McDonough have been discussing potential activities for a disability pride event in July including doing a food-related event at the Milano Center.
- Commissioner Sheets will report back at the Commission on Disability with more definite plans regarding a disability pride event. Commission Chair Hoff requested a short written summary of ideas for the event be presented at the April meeting.
- Commissioner Sheets also detailed a survey that could be used to help local businesses describe how they are disability-friendly/accessible.
- Commissioner Boyd has been talking with Kris Rodolico from Follow Your Art about a possible storytelling event. In the summer, Follow Your Art doesn't have staff so volunteers would be needed.
- Melrose's Mayor and local and state officials will be invited to this event.

8. Community Education Guide

- Commissioner Hoff is continuing to work on edits to the guide and will have an updated version for the April meeting. Commissioner Hoff continues to work on the guide with help from Commissioner Hale and they are reorganizing and editing it by categorizing the resources in it.
- Commissioner Hoff plans to work with a colleague on formatting the guide.

- Commissioner Hoff expects to have a final draft ready for April.

9. Meeting with Mayor

- Commissioner's Hoff and Boyd had a meeting with Mayor Grigoraitis who was very positive about the work of the commission. Commissioner Hoff noted that the Mayor is looking for a city employee to be on the Commission on Disability.
- They also discussed implementation of the Transition Plan, and as a starting point, making changes in signage.
- The mayor is also looking for the commission's assistance in developing of city policies on accessibility, particularly for city meetings and events. Commissioner Hoff suggested the Commission start creating a list of policy areas to work on with the Mayor and work with the city to develop draft language for policies. This will be discussed further at the Commission's April meeting.

10. Webpage

- The need for links to resources, narrative content, event accessibility tips, and graphics, to be placed on the website was discussed. It was also felt it would be good to put a calendar on the Commission's website with the Commission's meetings and events for the community to view. It would be good to put in a request to the city for these changes to be made.
- The website also needs to have the Commission's mission statement.
- Commissioner Hoff and Commissioner Boyd will work on further investigating changes that need to be made to the Commission's website.

11. Officer Elections

- Commissioner Hoff was re-elected as Commission's Chair
- Commissioner Sheets was elected as the Commission's Vice Chair
- Commissioner Boyd was elected as Secretary.
- Commissioner Hale motioned to accept the slate of officers for 2024-2025. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Boyd and passed unanimously.

12. Other business:

- The Melrose Creative Alliance is having a summit at Rising Eagle on March 30th which will include accessible art.
- All Melrose Commission on Disability members need to complete mandated Conflict of Interest training as soon as possible.
- The city recently held a training for Board members. Chair Hoff will send materials from the meeting to other commissioners as it covers open meeting law.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:01PM. The motion was made by Commissioner Boyd, seconded by Commissioner Sheets and passed unanimously.

Meeting minutes submitted by Commissioner Maggie Sheets