



**City of Melrose Commission on Disability (MCOB)
Meeting Minutes**

Meeting Date: February 12, 2025

Commissioners Present:

Garin Boyd (Secretary)
Alaine Breen
Gary Hale
Erin Heyneman
David Hoff (Chair)
Margaret Sheets (Vice Chair)
Matthew Travers

1. Call to Order

Commission Chair Hoff called to order the regular meeting of the Commission on Disability at 7:02 PM.

2. Approval of minutes from last meeting

A motion to approve the minutes from the January 8, 2025 meeting was made by Vice Chair Sheets and seconded by Commissioner Hale. Passed unanimously.

3. Public Participation

Meagan M. commented that sidewalk snow shoveling ordinance (and enforcement and fines) was inequitable because some individuals would not be in compliance due to disability.

4. CODA/State Updates

No one from the Commission was able to make the meeting this month. Commissioner Chair Hoff informed the Commission that MOD Executive Director Mary Mahon McCauley is retiring and her retirement party is 2/14. Commissioner Chair Hoff also indicated he had attended the Melrose Community Coalition meeting where he had informed the coalition that the Community Access Guide would soon be available.

5. Federal Actions Impacting Disability

There is concern over recent federal government job and resource cutting, as well as attacks on people with disabilities by the administration in regards to anti DEI efforts, and what affect that may have on the disabled community. There are also concerns around a Medicaid cap for

funding and possible cuts to Medicare and SNAP programs. There are also grave concerns around Department of Education cuts.

Autism Housing Pathways has created a doc with all the federal cuts being made.

The commission discussed what its role was appropriate in terms of the federal actions. Commissioner Heyneman stated that the Melrose Commission on Disability could help individuals in our community disseminate the information coming in daily from executive orders and federal cuts, and could be a resource to assist as needed.

6. Use of Funds Policy

Commissioner Breen shared an update on the Use of Funds Policy. Language has been added to include and facilitate city approval. In the 2nd paragraph language was added to indicate funding requests would be assessed on a case by case basis and funding requests deemed appropriate would be approved by the city. (Policy attached.) Commissioner Travers will bring the policy to the city. Motion to approve policy was called by Commissioner Sheets and seconded by Commissioner Heyneman. Vote passed unanimously and will be sent to Mayoral Chief of Staff Grymek.

7. City Policy Development Update

Commissioners Hale and Travers, and Commission Chair Hoff have worked on this and made additional changes. "Reasonable assurance" section has been removed as it was considered redundant. It was suggested that an Executive Summary of guide might be preferable for individual consumption.

8. Community Education Guide Update

Commission Chair Hoff indicated that Community Education Guide is still in progress. Commissioner Sheets offered assistance.

9. SEPAC

No update from SEPAC. Budget crisis is main issue for Melrose School Committee. Possibility that middle/high school principal jobs will be combined. Melrose Commission on Disability has not had a representative from SEPAC for quite some time.

10. Disability Pride 2025 plans

- Confirmation that Follow Your Art Community Studios will once again create our mural on the YMCA for July's Disability Pride.
- YMCA health director indicated chair aerobics and chair pilates are offered.
- Library is excited to host a book reading. Author James Norris, whose book was read last year during Disability Pride has moved to Florida and could possibly be contacted to read his book over Zoom this year.
- Discussion around a Disability Art Show. Follow Your Art has indicated that the facility would be open during July but would have limited staffing for both gallery setup and showing. Potential space may be upper level of Memorial Hall.

- Possibility of panel discussion.

11. Officer elections – March meeting

Melrose Commission on Disability will have officer elections during March 12th meeting.

13. Other business:

- **Universally Accessible Playground**- Commission Chair Hoff received an email from a Wakefield resident looking for cost information on our park. He will follow up.
- **MBTA Advisory Board**- Commissioner Boyd did not have an update this month, has not been receiving meeting update.

14. Adjournment

Motion made by Commissioner Sheets, seconded by Commissioner Heyneman.

Adjourned at 8:00 PM.

Meeting minutes submitted by Garin Boyd, Commission Secretary.

MELROSE COMMISSION ON DISABILITY USE OF FUNDS – DRAFT POLICY

Background:

Melrose Has adopted Massachusetts G.L. c. 420, s. 22G allowing the Disability Commission to use funds “solely for the benefit of persons with disabilities,” and in accordance with city or town policies. PER guidance from the city solicitor, these public funds are meant to support municipal projects/events that will benefit people with disabilities. The Massachusetts Office on Disability sets out the following:

“Proper use of Commission on Disability funds

Public funds, such as funds administered by a COD through the Handicapped Parking Program, must be used for a public purpose. Cities and towns that choose to enact Chapter 40, Section 22G must use these funds “solely for the benefit of persons with disabilities,” and in accordance with city or town policies. CODs must also adhere to the Anti-Aid Amendment to the Massachusetts Constitution (i.e., funds cannot be used for religious purposes).

Appropriate use of funds may include, for example, special education equipment for local public schools, structural changes to city or town buildings, adaptive equipment for a municipal “library of things,” and more. These funds cannot be used to support private businesses, nonprofit organizations or individuals. Instead, they should be used to support municipal projects that will benefit people with disabilities.”

Circumstances:

There have been instances where funds have been requested from the Commission for benefit of individuals with disabilities through events or initiatives by private individuals and organizations.

Commission Policy:

To provide clarity, ensure compliance with MGL c. 40, s. 22G and provide a framework to assess and respond to future requests, the Commission has approved the following policy:

Use of Commission on Disability (COD) funds can be considered by the COD on a case by case basis. Use of funds may be subject to final approval by the appropriate City of Melrose official, if or as deemed necessary by the COD. To be considered, the funding request should meet one or more of the following criteria:

- (1) be an effort of or in connection with Commission initiatives to broaden exposure, bring awareness and provide community resources that will benefit the Melrose disability community and the Melrose community at large; this includes, but is not limited to, Commission sponsored events, or events co-sponsored by the Commission and a community organization partner or partners;
- (2) benefit or assist the disability community or segments thereof within Melrose municipal buildings;
- (3) enhance accessibility in programming within the Melrose public schools, Melrose Public Library, Milano Senior Center or other municipal facilities.