

## Houston Commission on Disabilities

October 12th, 2023 — 4:00 - 6:00 PM

### Housekeeping items:

- Provide instruction on ASL/Captioning and camera expectations for guests. Please make sure to introduce yourself before speaking for the ASL interpreters.
- If a commissioner is attending virtually, please keep your video and microphones off, but then turn your camera on for voting.
- If you are attending in person, please refrain from side conversations, as there are sensitive microphones throughout the room, and we will hear you speaking. Reminders about turning on/off microphones
- Individuals are encouraged to bring their computers to access the translating services.
- There is public WiFi in the building (TS-Web, no password)

Chair Meridith Silcox called the meeting to order at 4:06 PM with a quorum present and welcomed attendees to the meeting.

Chair Meridith Silcox asked Stephanie Haechten to proceed with the roll call.

### Roll Call of the Commissioners:

Position 1: Michael Cottingham	Absent
Position 2: Ricky Don Harris	Present
Position 3: Ann M. Bacon	Absent
Position 4: Daquan Minor	Absent
Position 5: Sashikala Nisankarao	Present
Position 6: Monique Mason	Present
Position 7: AJ Morton	Present
Position 8: Amie Jean	Present
Position 9: Mary Sias	Present
Position 10: Meridith Silcox – Chair	Present
Position 11: Lydia Nunez Landry	Absent
Position 12: Michaela Cueto	Present
Position 13: Osvaldo Capmany	Present
Position 14: Alexis Smith	Absent
Ex-Officio: Angel Ponce	Present
Ex-Officio: Marshall Watson	Present

Legal: Rebekah Wendt

Absent

**MOPD Staff:**

Angel Ponce, Kayla Melcho, Sissel Carlsen, Rey Herrera, Stephanie Haechten, Amanda Boyd, Hilary Pircher

**Metropolitan Multiservice Center Staff:**

Chuck French, Hannah Walker, Nolan Griffin

**Review and Approval of September Meeting Minutes**

- Motion: Vice Chair Harris
- Second: Commissioner Amie Jean

**Public Comments**

- Esmeralda Parra – Workforce Solutions, Career Navigator
  - a. Career Office are participating in Disability Employment Awareness Month
  - b. Several upcoming events and brought material for commissioners and public attendees

**Expert Speaker**

- Akili Atkinson, MS – Neurodiversity Training and Autism Specialist
- Uncovering The Challenges of Inclusive Employment
  - o Inclusive workplace and disability
  - o Reasonable accommodations
  - o The economic impact of not including people with disabilities in the workplace
  - o Challenges in the workplace and how to talk with your employer
  - o Benefits of an inclusive workforce
  - o Question from Commissioner Jean: What are the requirements for HR to accommodate a disability?
  - o Question from Tina Williams: How do we (people with disabilities) become visible? Atkinson: Go to their space, show up. Public spaces are everyone's space.
  - o Question from Commissioner Nisankarao: What do we do if an employer's response to an accommodation request is "If we do it for you, then we have to do it for everyone else?" Atkinson: Bring cited material from ADA and the ramifications for not providing accommodations.
  - o Question from VC Harris: I'm curious about your experiences with making information accessible or if you have an information on managing conversations with organization that need to make

improvements. Atkinson: We still have more work to do. Example of a hardware store using apple products to accommodate a deaf employee and now use that product for the entire organization.

### **MOPD Report to the HCOD**

- Angel Ponce (Director, Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities)
  - o New MOPD Staff: Program Assistant
  - o CenterPoint Energy Poles
    - MOPD working with HPW on a Franchise Agreement
  - o Information and Referral Services – served 1,510 through casework, outreach and training
    - Four new trainings and events in the month of October
  - o Pedestrian Accessibility Review – 17 applications and 6 projects since last month; over 3,000 new feet of sidewalks
  - o MMSC Community Garden Improvement Plan
  - o White Cane Safety Day – join us at MMSC on Saturday from 9am-1pm to celebrate with the community
  - o Getting It Right Workshop
  - o MST Disability Celebration
    - Fantastic event!
  - o Requesting that the HCOD take on the task of Secretary in the coming months

### **MMSC Report to the HCOD**

- Larry Turner Classic at Texas State
  - o First time MMSC had a prep team (6-14 year olds) Lil' Rockets!
  - o Adult time came in 2<sup>nd</sup> place
- Halloween Tabata Boos-Day
  - o Please join us on October 31<sup>st</sup> at 1pm
- Metal and Muscle Expo
  - o November 3-5<sup>th</sup>, 2023
  - o 10 rugby teams, 10 basketball team, 6 power teams, sitting volleyball
  - o Need volunteers! You can get flyers from Stephanie Haechten

### **Committee Updates**

- Committee updates and contact information has been emailed out by Chair Silcox
- Updates: no committee reports at this time
  - Education & Employment

- Community Access, Transition, & Housing
- Emergency Preparedness and First Responder Training
- Planning, Membership, and Community Engagement (as needed)

**ADA Update** (Marshall Watson, Administrative Coordinator – ADA, City of Houston, Human Resources Department, Civil Service & EEO Division)

- No report, but you will receive the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter report in November

### **Upcoming Event Reminders**

- a. Houston White Cane Safety Day – Saturday, October 14<sup>th</sup> (MMSC)
- b. TWC Listening Session – October 17<sup>th</sup> at MMSC
- c. Metal and Muscle – November 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> (George R. Brown)
- d. Information on early voting

### **Meeting Schedule**

- e. Location TranStar (6922 Katy Road, Houston, TX 77024)
  - i. November 9<sup>th</sup> (fully in-person with livestream on Facebook)
  - ii. December 14<sup>th</sup> (Orientation)

### **Commissioners Comments**

- Commissioner Nisankaro: Voter Line 713-755-6965 to find the nearest voting location
- Vice Chair Harris: If we need accommodation or accessibility, please contact MOPD and they will help connect you to the right people.

Chair Silcox motions to adjourn meeting. Vice Chair Harris and Commissioner Nisankaro **seconds it. Meeting closes at 5:18 PM.**

Meeting Minutes recorded by Stephanie Haechten,  
stephanie.haechten@houstontx.gov.

Please email any corrections.