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**City of Melrose Commission on Disability**

**Meeting Minutes**

Meeting Date: September 13, 2021

Commissioners Present:

Garin Boyd

Karen Burke

David Hoff

Margaret Sheets (left at approximately 6:30 PM)

Paula Weiner

Commissioners Absent:

Erin Heyneman

1. Call to Order

Commission Chair Hoff called to order the regular meeting of the Commission on Disability at 6:09.

1. **Approval of minutes from last meeting**

A motion to approve the minutes from the August 9, 2021 meeting was made by Garin Boyd and second by Maggie Sheets. Passed unanimously.

1. **Public Participation**

No public comments

1. **Commission on Disability Association (CODA) Update**

David Hoff reported on the September 1st CODA meeting. A primary focus was a presentation from the City of Cambridge regarding the building bike lanes in the community and impact on people with disabilities.

1. **Bike/Ped Committee Follow-Up**

The request from the Bike/Ped Committee to visit and review the new lane configuration on lower Main Street was discussed. Paula Weiner will follow up with Finn McSweeny from the committee to arrange a review.

1. **MOD Funding Application**

The application to the Massachusetts Office on Disability for funding of a Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan was discussed. The requirements for the application were reviewed and input received. David Hoff has been in touch with city officials to get the information needed for the application, as well the Institute for Human Centered Design (IHCD) regarding serving as a consultant on this project. Examples of Self-Evaluation and Transition Plans were shared. IHCD is in the process of preparing a budget figure. The question was raised as to whether the consultant services would be subject to a bid process if the grant is awarded, and David Hoff said he would check on that. He will also check with MOD to confirm that matching funds are not required. Paula Weiner offered to assist David with the development and submission of the application by the October 8, 2021 deadline.

If the grant is received, this will require active involvement of the city’s ADA Coordinator. This role is currently held by Paul Johnson, the Building Inspector. Mr. Johnson has indicated that due to his other duties, he is unable to meet with the commission for several months. With the formation of the Commission on Disability, and greater focus on accessibility issues in the city, the possibility of asking the Mayor to shift these duties to another staff person was discussed. Karen Burke also suggested the possibility of creating a part-time position fully dedicated to the ADA Coordinator duties. Commission Chair Hoff will follow up with the Mayor regarding this.

1. **Workplan Review**

The draft workplan was reviewed. This discussion included the following:

* It was decided to hold off on item #2 (accessibility for city meetings and events), to potentially have this addressed via the Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan.
* Garin Boyd agreed to handle social media for the commission.
* Possible logos for the commission were discussed, using the tag line “One Community Open to All”. David Hoff will check with a contact he has regarding getting a logo.
* Website: Karen Burke will work on adding an email form to the commission’s web page.
* Resource list: Commissioners were asked to review the resource list created by Paula Weiner and provide feedback.
* Building variances: Clarification is still needed regarding the process of review of building variances by the commission, as required by the state. Commission Chair Hoff will follow up with the City Planner, Denise Gaffey.
* Accessible parking requests: As a follow-up, the process for requesting an accessible parking space is straight-forward and does not require a meeting of the Parking Commission. However, the commission would like to create a standardized sheet (similar to other communities), to make such a request, along with instructions, to be posted on the commissions web page.
* The workplan will be a living document on the commission’s Google Drive, to be updated on an ongoing basis.

1. **Senior Health Fair**

The city is holding a Senior Health Fair on October 19th from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. It was suggested that the commission have a table for outreach at this event. Karen Burke will follow up.

1. **Universal Access Playground Update**

David Hoff noted that he met with Joan Bell, Superintendent of Mount Hood and Public Open Spaces, and two parent representatives, and one of the potential builders of the new universal playground, at the site on Warren and Melrose Street. There will be a meeting with another developer on September 27th. Karen Burke volunteered to serve as liaison for the universal playground project. The Mayor Thomas M. Menino Park in Charlestown, and Beebe School Playground in Malden were suggested as examples of the standard for the playground.

1. **Library Renovation Update**

The order for the bond to pay for the library renovations will be coming before the Appropriations Committee in the near future. Commission Chair Hoff will send a letter on behalf of the commission to all members of the City Council urging their support for this funding, with a focus on the need to renovate the library to make it fully accessible.

1. **Victorian Fair Recap**

Commission members felt Sunday’s Victorian Fair provided good initial community outreach. Mailing list names collected will be typed up and put in a running list on the Google Drive. Issues identified: a) General consensus that the city is not as welcoming to people with disabilities as it could be, and sometimes people are afraid to speak out on issues; b) Need to follow up with those conducting the diversity survey regarding possibly using a similar mechanism, and whether some of the data they are collecting could be of use to the COD; c) Questions on benefits to people with disabilities in Melrose, such as tax abatement; Karen Burke will check with the assessor’s office.

It was suggested that we have schwag for future events. Paula Weiner said she would investigate options.

1. **Commission Vacancy**

One individual, a parent of a child with a disability, has come forward as a possible candidate for the commission vacancy. It was discussed that ideally the opening would be filled by someone who self-identifies themself as having a disability. Commission members were asked to do outreach for additional candidates.

1. **Commission Email Account**

The commission email account is set up and will be monitored by Commission Chair Hoff. Karen Burke noted that the commission’s phone line is also set up.

1. **Input on Changes to City Ordinances Regarding Sight Line Issues at Corners**

The commission discussed the request from City Councilor Shawn MacMaster regarding issues of site lines at corners and feedback regarding accessibility, and possible update of city ordinances. The commission noted the need to ensure sidewalk access, and the safety of those in wheelchairs who might be crossing streets. Commission Chair Hoff will follow up with Councilor MacMaster.

1. **Commission on Aging Partnership**

The Commission on Aging is developing a system of spotters in the community regarding issues regarding older adults and feels it may be useful to combine these efforts to those regarding disability issues. Commission Chair Hoff will follow up with Council on Aging Director Stacey Minchello about attending a future meeting to discuss further.

1. **Adjournment**

Meeting was adjourned at 8:05. Motion made by Garin Boyd, seconded by Karen Burke. Passed unanimously.

Meeting minutes submitted by David Hoff, Commission Chair.