



Programs & Services Committee Report

City of Newton In City Council

Monday, July 12, 2021

Present: Councilors Krintzman (Chair), Noel, Albright, Humphrey, Ryan, Greenberg, and Wright
Absent: Councilor Baker

City Staff: Nathan Giacalone, Committee Clerk

#228-21 **Appointment of Rabbi Darby Leigh to the Commission on Disability**
HER HONOR THE MAYOR appointing RABBI DARBY LEIGH, 47 Rokeby Road, as a member of the COMMISSION ON DISABILITY for a term to expire on July 15, 2023. (60 Days: 08/06/21)

Action: **Programs & Services Approved 7-0**

Notes: The Programs & Services Committee invited Rabbi Leigh to discuss his appointment to the Commission on Disability for a term to end on July 15, 2023. Rabbi Leigh said that disability advocacy and education has been a part of his life since he was young. This was framed by being a person born with a disability living in a world not set up to meet the needs of those with disabilities. Further, Rabbi Leigh said that it is a deep moral and ethical stance of his that society is at its best when it provides opportunities to everybody. In Newton, for example, Zoom meetings were difficult for the hearing impaired to understand until the closed captioning system was improved and put into wider use.

The Committee thanked Rabbi Leigh for his willingness to serve.

Discussion:

Q: Should closed captioning be turned on by default at City meetings?

A: This is a great question and a matter of opinion. My opinion is that it should be and I have spoken at length with Jini Fairley about this at the beginning of the pandemic. At that stage, Zoom's closed captioning was neither effective nor widely used. Since it has improved, it should be turned on at all meetings. As long as the meeting host has enabled captions, the viewer is able to turn them on or off at will. Nothing is lost by enabling this function.

Mr. Giacalone was asked to discuss this with Acting City Clerk Ms. Khan, and he said he would the following day.

C: Several years ago, a plan was under development to assess all city buildings for accessibility but was never enacted. As a COD member, hopefully you will be able to push to make this plan public.

C: Accessibility features should be improved, not just to benefit those with various disabilities but for all residents of Newton.

Rabbi Leigh thanked the Councilors and emphasized that improving disability access improves conditions for everybody.

Councilor Humphrey motioned to approve which carried 7-0.

The meeting adjourned at 7:03pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Josh Krintzman, Chair