



CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Commission On Disability

Meeting Date: March 4, 2020
Room B17
Time: 1-4PM

MINUTES

Ruthanne Fuller
Mayor

This meeting is in addition to the Commission's regularly scheduled monthly meetings. Reports, including CDBG access projects will not be discussed.

Commission Members Present:

Anne Marie Killilea, Co-chair
Lakshmi Kadambi, Co-chair
Jane Brown, Treasurer
Warren Abramson, participating remotely
Rob Caruso, participating remotely
Lucie Chansky
Rosemary Larking
Sandra Lingley
Barbara Lischinsky
Eileen Sandberg
Matt Volpi

Commission Members Absent:
Girard Plante

City Staff and Advisors Present:
Jini Fairley, ADA/Section 504 Coordinator
Dana Hanson, Mayor's Office

Guests:
Tyrone Hooks

1) Introductions (1:00-1:05PM)

All members were in attendance at the beginning of the meeting except Girard. Warren and Rob participated remotely over the phone.

2) Getting to Know Each COD Member (1:05-2:05PM)

Each Member shared their personal history and their reasons for entry to the COD. Members have had their share of struggles with finding appropriate and adequate accommodations and each shared their role in advocacy and fight for rights for themselves, sometimes for their family members and the community. Some members have been on boards of different Disability rights committees and non- profits across Newton and Massachusetts, like ARC of Massachusetts, Newton PAC, Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities

Barney Heath,
**Director, Planning &
Development**

Amanda Berman
**Director, Housing &
Community Development**

Tiffany Leung
**Planner
Community Development**

Members

Lakshmi Kadambi, Co-Chair
Anne Marie Killilea, Co-Chair
Jane Brown, Treasurer
Warren Abramson
Rob Caruso
Lucie Chansky
Rosemary Larking
Sandra Lingley
Barbara Lischinsky
Girard Plante
Eileen Sandberg
Matt Volpi

Jason Rosenberg
Chairman Emeritus

Advisor

Sergeant Bob Lee, Jr.
Newton Police Department

Staff

Jini Fairley
ADA/Sec 504 Coordinator
617-796-1253

1000 Commonwealth Ave.
Newton, MA 02459
T 617-796-1240
F 617-796-1254



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Council, Understanding our Differences, Independent Living Centers, Human Rights Commission, Fair Housing Committee, NWW etc. Members have been actively involved with advocating for accessible parking, accessibility in parks and play equipment, accessible and affordable housing, accessible City buildings, curb cuts, sidewalks, crosswalks, signals, and streets. Moving forward members unanimously expressed the need to find more ways to be more visible to citizens of Newton and continue to fight bias on behalf of the community and find ways to provide reasonable accommodations to people with disabilities in various walks of life so they can be included in the community. A member also noted that we can show that people with disabilities can do so much instead of sitting around and wait to be served.

- All members also agreed that they would like to see less acrimony between members or officials in the city at monthly meetings and more chances to work cohesively on shared goals and interests.
- Members praised the good work done by City's ADA coordinator Jini Fairley

3. Short- and Long-Term Goals for the Commission (2:05-3:05PM)

Members are interested in working on the following short- and long-term goals:

- Informing and educating citizens about the Late deafened so accommodations can be made in work places, the MBTA, churches, synagogues etc. and hospital staff like Newton Wellesley Hospital.
- Could an additional COD member alternate to be part of the Quarterly meeting with the Mayor apart from the co-chairs and Jini.
- COVID 19 Emergency response: Members discussed the need to be part of the city's emergency response working group for COVID 19. They were informed that the city has not opened this to the residents as of now and that Jini, as the liaison in the city, would be included just as other department heads such as department heads representing Senior citizens, Schools and Businesses. Presently Department of Health and Human services and the Mayor are in constant contact with Mass State departments, Governor's office and CDC.
- Emergency response to Climate change for people with disabilities: Members are interested in being part of Climate change committee recently set up by the city as Newton is planning on employing a climate coach.
- Working on Accessible and affordable housing needs for people with disability especially housing below 50% to 60% AMI and other low income housing needs
- Continue to work on sidewalks, curb cuts and crosswalks across the city, parking space issues like Nexus.
- Interested in promoting health and wellness of disabled population through adaptive sports, where the disabled are challenged, water sports such as canoeing, kayaking, wind surfing, paddle boating, in the Charles. (e.g.: Access Sports America, activities) Participation in marathons and other such physical activities and running events also to be encouraged.

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- Working in collaboration with commissions and boards such as Fair housing and Human rights.
- Having the cities non-profits working in the area of disabilities present to the commission on their projects.
- Bringing a job fair for people with disabilities to the city.
- Working with Newton Wellesley Hospital on Access and other issues.
- Working with MBTA on accessible stations etc.
- Working on rights of the disabled and fight bias. Especially talk about immigrant workers roles in personal care jobs.
- Work on producing a new COD Brochure, Information sheets/ Leaflets, Quarterly Newsletter, regular articles in the TAB, Podcasts, Webinars, Social media- Facebook and Instagram.
- Regular New TV Program- interviews of members and other disabled leaders in the community
- Work on webpage enhancements
- Enquire with the public what they would like the commission to do for them
- Work with transportation, RIDE accommodations etc.
- Need for ramps vs stairs in new constructions apart from elevators. Ex: MBTA stations
- Support sibling support groups and work in the schools to interest youth in joining the commission activities as volunteers
- Role of COD in Newton schools: arranging talks by members/ speakers' panel.

**Discuss events such as 30th ADA Anniversary celebration (co-sponsor with HRC and FHC)
Consider Accessible Parking Fines Funding Opportunities**

- 1 **Mayors Commemoration with proclamation on July 26th ADA 30th Anniversary and a small ceremony at City Hall.**
- 2 **Table at Fall Harvest Fair along with HRC and Fair Housing Commission with ADA material and COD brochures and Information sheets on various topics**
- 3 **Draw people into booth/ table by having gifts with COD information like pens, water bottles etc.**
- 4 **Access Sports America fall picnic and COD team building and community picnic Along with tables of nonprofits at Auburndale Cove**
- 5 **Supporting scholarships to summer camps or persons to work at camp**
- 6 **Supporting members attending workshops and seminars**
- 7 **Grant program for Accessible playground equipment as this is not funded by CDBG**
- 8 **Donation to UOD and SEPAC for Honorarium to speakers especially UOD that lost their founder Carol Beard this year.**
- 9 **Donation to Athletes Unlimited and perhaps the Highschool Unified sports team**
- 10 **Funding for hearing aid or any other such fund through city for people with disability that which is not given through insurance**

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3) Implementation of these Goals (3:05-3:50PM)

By implementing changes in meeting structure, the COD hopes to gain more time for planning and discussion of goals/ideas/projects outlined above.

Discussion on start time for regular COD meetings:

A motion was made by Jane to change the start time for the COD meetings to 6:00 pm instead of 6:30pm, effective immediately. Eileen seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by a vote of 11-0.

End time will remain at 8:30pm. This would give more time for discussion on topics discussed in today's meeting. Also people presenting to the COD could go before the commissions business is taken up.

Some members requested that they contribute to the Agenda, it appears that it is the Co-chairs responsibility to make the Agenda.

It was decided to strictly follow the 3-minute rule for each speaker idea as voted upon in a previous meeting to be efficient with time. CO- chairs are asked to feel free to cut people off when necessary. Co-chairs voiced that they were still in learning phase and hence hesitate to cut people off.

Also, in the interest of time it was discussed that all reports may not be discussed at every meeting. If report is unchanged it will just be announced and no lengthy repetitive discussion will be encouraged. Members are asked to finish reading the reports and the previous minutes and documents sent by Jini before coming to the meeting.

At this juncture, Rob noted that there was a small layout error in a previous set of minutes, luckily before it went to print for the meeting. Jini requests that people call her back if they notice anything amiss so she can correct any errors.

4) Wrap Up (3:50-4:00PM) Everybody expressed their hope to move the COD towards a new positive path.

5) Adjournment (4:00PM)

The meeting adjourned on time.

These minutes were prepared from an audio recording and submitted by Lakshmi Kadambi.

NEXT MEETING DATE: March 9, 2020

The location of this meeting is wheelchair accessible and reasonable accommodations will be provided to persons with disabilities requiring assistance. If you need a reasonable accommodation, please contact the city of Newton's ADA/Sec.504 Coordinator, Jini Fairley, at least two business days in advance of the meeting: jfairley@newtonma.gov or (617) 796-1253. For Telecommunications Relay Service, please dial 711 or call City Hall's TTY/TDD line at 617-796-1089.