

The Houston Commission on Disabilities Meeting Minutes for April 13th, 2023

The Houston Commission on Disabilities met on Thursday, April 13, 2023. Social distancing guidance in response to the COVID-19 pandemic prompted the Commission to meet online through Zoom.

Chair Silcox called the meeting to order at 4:05 pm with a quorum present and welcomed attendees to the meeting. Chair Silcox asked Kayla Melcho to proceed with the roll call.

Roll Call of the Commissioners:

Position 1: Michael Cottingham	Present
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: Vacant	Unfilled
Position 9: Vacant	Unfilled
Position 10: Meridith Silcox – Chair	Present
Position 11: Lydia Nunez Landry	Present
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:

Stephanie Haechten, Kayla Melcho, Sissel Carlsen, John Serrano, Amanda Boyd, Alex Chau

West Gray Multiservice Center Staff:

Hannah Walker, Nolan Griffin

Approval of Minutes:

No minutes to be approved – a quorum was not present for the March 2023 meeting.

Public Comments:

None at this time.

Presentation:

Earth Day 2023 – Billy Rudolph, Chief of Staff - Administration and Regulatory Affairs, City of Houston.

- Speaker series begins on Monday, April 17th through Tuesday April 18th
- Speakers will be presenting every hour from 8:00 am – 5:00 pm
- About 22 different panelist sessions to choose from.
 - **Topics include:** transportation, water conservation, electric vehicles, microgrids, low carbon initiatives, solar energy, green buildings, recycling, forestry, environmental justice, and disproportionality of climate changes impact on people with disabilities.
- Festival begins at 10:00 am on Wednesday, April 19th
- Festival will have special guests including Mayor Turner, music, a fashion show, and an urban garden. Food trucks and giveaways will be taking place.
- Visit earthdayhtx.org for more information.

Presentation:

Houston's Pragmatic Studies Program - Justo Garcia, Admissions Counselor, Kolbe School of Innovation and Professional Services, University of Saint Thomas-Houston

- Kolbe School of Innovation and Professional Services has been around since 2019 and the University of St. Thomas has been around since 1947
- Chairman Dr. Torres and her team launched the Pragmatic Studies Program in 2021:
- Pragmatic Studies is a two year program that offers in person courses to students with disabilities.
- Pragmatic Studies course offers wrap-around services that are integrated into the program using their universal design learning module.
 - Based on three principles: Engagement, Representation, and Material
- Offers dedicated academic success coach, program support, time management, learning therapists, and access to resources.
- UST offers five online degree programs:
 - server security, network technology, general business, drug and alcohol counseling and general studies
- Housing is available on campus or individuals can commute.

- As the program expands, merit-based scholarships will become available.
- Applicants must have graduated from high school and complete a free application. No GPA requirements for online courses.

MOPD Director's Report:

MOPD Report to the HCOD (Angel Ponce, Director, Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities)

- Addressed need for a Secretary to be appointed for future HCOD meetings.
- MOPD was present yesterday for the City Hall appointment of the new commissioners by the Mayor and City Hall.
- Welcomed new commissioners.
- Review of committee's available to join
- Welcomed and introduced MOPD's new Senior Community Outreach Coordinator, Stephanie Haechten
- Welcomed and introduced MOPD's new Community Liaison, Sissel Carlsen
- Acknowledged promotion of Kayla Melcho from Community Liaison to Community Engagement Coordinator

Metropolitan Multiservice Center Report:

MMSC Report to the HCOD – Hannah Walker, Facilities Manager, Houston Parks and Recreation Department

- Basketball team just returned from Wichita
- Gearing up for summer league
- Partnered with Move United for the NCAA – had the opportunity to provide a wheelchair basketball demo and get the crowd and athletes into chairs.
- Happy birthday to Nolan
- Nolan starting up the kid's track and field program

Committee Updates:

None at this time.

ADA Update:

None at this time.

Chair Silcox motions to adjourn meeting. Commissioner Ricky Harris seconds it. Meeting closes at 5:31 PM.

Meeting Minutes recorded by Kayla Melcho, kayla.melcho@houstontx.gov

Please send any corrections to Kayla Melcho.