**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
  1. Career Office are participating in Disability Employment Awareness Month
  2. 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
  + Inclusive workplace and disability
  + Reasonable accommodations
  + The economic impact of not including people with disabilities in the workplace
  + Challenges in the workplace and how to talk with your employer
  + Benefits of an inclusive workforce
  + Question from Commissioner Jean: What are the requirements for HR to accommodate a disability?
  + 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.
  + 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.
  + 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)
  + New MOPD Staff: Program Assistant
  + CenterPoint Energy Poles
    - MOPD working with HPW on a Franchise Agreement
  + Information and Referral Services – served 1,510 through casework, outreach and training
    - Four new trainings and events in the month of October
  + Pedestrian Accessibility Review – 17 applications and 6 projects since last month; over 3,000 new feet of sidewalks
  + MMSC Community Garden Improvement Plan
  + White Cane Safety Day – join us at MMSC on Saturday from 9am-1pm to celebrate with the community
  + Getting It Right Workshop
  + MST Disability Celebration
    - Fantastic event!
  + 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
  + First time MMSC had a prep team (6-14 year olds) Lil’ Rockets!
  + Adult time came in 2nd place
* Halloween Tabata Boos-Day
  + Please join us on October 31st at 1pm
* Metal and Muscle Expo
  + November 3-5th, 2023
  + 10 rugby teams, 10 basketball team, 6 power teams, sitting volleyball
  + 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 3rd Quarter report in November

**Upcoming Event Reminders**

* 1. Houston White Cane Safety Day – Saturday, October 14th (MMSC)
  2. TWC Listening Session – October 17th at MMSC
  3. Metal and Muscle – November 3rd-5th (George R. Brown)
  4. Information on early voting

**Meeting Schedule**

* 1. Location TranStar (6922 Katy Road, Houston, TX 77024)
     1. November 9th (fully in-person with livestream on Facebook)
     2. December 14th (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.