

MAYOR'S COMMITTEE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES MINUTES

December 13, 2010 City Hall, Rm 209, 6:30 p.m.
1000 Commonwealth Avenue, Newton, Massachusetts 02459

Members Present:

Jane Brown
Rob Caruso, Co-Chair
Lucie Chansky
Jini Fairley
Rosemary Larking
Barbara Lischinsky
Heather Platt
Girard Plante, Co-Chair
Jason Rosenberg

Staff Present:

Kathleen Cahill, Community Development Senior Planner

Public Present:

Bev Droz
Sandra Lingley
Donald Larking
Janet Razulis
Debby Smith, Outreach Coordinator, Perkins Braille and Talking Book Library
Ruth Smith

Regrets:

Jeff Hutter

R. Caruso called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

1. **Guest Speaker:** Debby Smith, Outreach Coordinator for Perkins Braille and Talking Book Library

Debby Smith, Outreach Coordinator for Perkins Braille and Talking Book Library, spoke to members about the services that the library has to offer to patrons. The library, which is free to the public, serves all New England states (with the exception of Connecticut) as well as Washington D.C. and North Carolina. Approximately 2,000 books are sent out to patrons every day. Since only a small percentage of library patrons read Braille, the new talking book machines that was purchased by Perkins is very popular. The machine has better playback features, improved sound quality and is more user friendly. Perkins Library loans the machines out along with audio recordings, both of which can be sent to patrons through the mail. Patrons can call or email requests for specific books or opt for the audio send feature. Patrons

using the audio send feature will receive books that are based on their interests, as expressed in their application. Ms. Smith distributed applications which are also available online. She encouraged anyone that was interested to sign up for the audio books.

2. **Minutes:** Consider approval of the minutes from the November 8, 2010 meeting of the Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities.

Two corrections to the minutes were made, these included: changing the date from October 18 to November 8 and changing the reference made to Jeanne Stickland as Executive Director of CAN-DO to Newton Community Development Foundation. H. Platt moved that the minutes be approved. J. Brown seconded the motion and the Board voted 9-0-0 to approve the minutes.

3. **Project Report:** CDBG funded access projects including discussion of announcements of available funding for FY12 funds.

K. Cahill reviewed the current status of projects funded with CDBG Access funds. Members spent time discussing the needed access improvements at the intersection of Washington Street and Commonwealth Avenue. These improvements include the installation of Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS) and compliant curb cuts. Recently, \$65,000 in mitigation funds from the Arborpoint Development and the expansion of the Newton-Wellesley Hospital were used to pay for vehicle traffic improvements at this intersection. The City had intended to use a portion of these mitigation funds for accessible improvements at this intersection until a vehicular accident resulted in the expensive replacement of a newly installed Mast Arm. The co-chairs met with the Mayor to see if other funds were available to pay for the installation of APS. After staff discussions with the Department of Public Works it was clear that although everyone believed this was a very worthy project CDBG funds were the only source of funding that was identified to pay for the APS.

The cost of installing 12 APS at this intersection is \$13,620. Currently, there is \$9,195 in FY10 Accessible Pedestrian Signals to dedicate to these costs. The CDBG Access project 'Projects To Be Determined' has a balance of \$8,000. A total of \$4,425 in Access Projects TBD funds are needed to bridge the gap in funding. H. Platt made a motion to recommend the transfer of \$4,425 in Access Projects TBD funds to FY10 APS. J. Brown seconded the motion and the Committee voted 8-1-0 to recommend the transfer of funding.

4. **Nomination Subcommittee:** January elections

L. Chansky made a motion to overrule the Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities' Statement of Mission and Organizational Structure, which states that an election be held every January for a chair/co-chairs, and to sustain the Committee's current co-chairs, Girard Plante and Rob Caruso. J. Rosenberg seconded the motion and the Committee voted 9-0-0 to sustain the current co-chairs of the Committee.

5. **Report:** Report on the activities of the Fair Housing Committee by Girard Plante.

G. Plante was unable to attend the last Fair Housing Committee meeting.

6. **Report:** Members and public report on any issues of non-compliance in the City which are then forwarded to the Inspectional Services Department.

R. Caruso indicated that he believes the New England Mobile Book Fair has less accessible parking than it is required to by law. It is difficult to get into the building because the ramp is non-compliant and there is no automatic door opener. K. Cahill will contact David Norton in the Inspectional Service Department about these issues. R. Caruso offered to accompany David on a site visit.

7. **Other Business**

Members of the Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities asked K. Cahill to send a letter to the Mayor and the Public Buildings Department, on behalf of the Committee, to express appreciation for the improvements to the accessible Homer Street entrance to City Hall.

K. Cahill notified members that the Mayor docketed the establishment of a Disabilities Commission with the Board of Aldermen. This item will likely be referred to the Programs and Services Committee at the Board's December 20, 2010 meeting.

Members requested that the Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities have an opportunity to provide input into any new appointments of members, in response to the recent notice seeking new members placed in the Newton TAB.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.