

**MAYOR'S COMMITTEE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
JANUARY 16, 2008**

MINUTES – Meeting in Newton City Hall – Cafeteria

PRESENT: Doug Sweet (Acting Chair), Jane Brown, Rob Caruso, Lucie Chansky, Herb Cole, Jini Fairley, Linda Hiller, Rosemary Larking, Barbara Lischinsky, Girard Plante, Heather Platt, Jason Rosenberg, Janna Zwerner

REGRETS: Jeff Hutter

STAFF: Beverly Droz, Lowell Haynes

GUESTS: Marlin LaBoy and Ashley Riessen, Eileen McGettigan (Law Dept.)

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The meeting was called to order at 7:15 pm, following the Committee's honoring of Lowell Haynes who has worked for more than 21 years with the MCPD and is retiring.

The meeting was chaired by Douglas Sweet, Acting Chair. Introductions were made and guests were welcomed.

The minutes of the 12/17/07 meeting were accepted.

February meeting date

Following discussion that Feb. 18 is a holiday and Bev will be away the week of Feb. 25, the Committee voted to meet Wednesday, Feb. 20.

Special motion

Rob Caruso acknowledged that Jason Rosenberg has been a tireless leader for MCPD since the inception of the Committee more than 30 years ago. He eloquently spoke of Jason's accomplishments and guidance. Rob made a motion to name Jason Rosenberg as Chair Emeritus and the motion was approved unanimously.

Committee vs. Commission

We welcomed Eileen McGettigan from the Law Department who has been involved with the MCPD for years. Eileen said there is a state statute to follow to become a commission but as Bev has pointed out, there would be 9 members, one of whom needs to be a municipal official. There could be a unique city ordinance designating different membership numbers and other points. The process would be to docket an item with the Board of Aldermen and tweak the state statute in a city ordinance to address issues such as larger membership. It was noted that the state statute talks about "you must have" certain disabilities to serve in a certain slot, and our Committee feels it has "grown" past that.

Jason spoke of alternate members and they could vote if some of the core members were not present, with regards to CDBG funding. Lowell felt all members could vote on those items. Bev noted that it is a choice to have alternate members verses core members and, as we adopt a statement of mission and organizational structure for the Committee (until which time it becomes a Commission), we are looking to move past that.

Jason noted we've never had a Mayor unfriendly to the Committee. A Commission has an element of recognition with more certainty and power. While we hope Newton would never have a Mayor that would not take the Committee seriously, being a Commission would give the body more power. Lucie said with regards to MOD (Mass. Office on Disabilities), they only talk about Commissions and want to see permanent bodies. Eileen does not think MOD cares if we're a Commission by state statute or by ordinance.

Jason said that his experience is that the Access Board has never discriminated against our work as a Committee compared to being a Commission. They follow our recommendations.

Lowell pointed out that for Commissions, members are interviewed by the Board of Aldermen and that means the Board would be more aware of the disabilities issues and the work we do. Janna stated we would have more power as a Commission and we could collect money, possibly thru some of the HP fines, but also for other projects. Eileen noted that if we become a Commission by ordinance we'd have more room to tweak membership numbers, but we would not collect HP fines.

Jason made a motion to become a Commission and that we defer upon whether it's by state statute or by ordinance and the motion passed. Jason and Eileen will meet and have wording by March 5, 2008.

Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee, consisting of Lucie and Barbara, reported that originally 5 members expressed interest in being co-chairs but 2 have withdrawn due to time constraints.

Girard wanted members to know that he withdrew as a nominee because he has been recently appointed to a PAC working group for the Executive Office of Health and Human Services. He spoke to the challenges facing the Administration. He'll be working on patient advocacy. MCPD members applauded him.

We then heard from the 3 candidates (stated very briefly below) and then discussed the voting procedure.

Rosemary Larking: She has been an advocate for the disabled for 59 years. She spoke to her advocacy and accomplishments. She would like to see the MCPD do more work through education and advocacy.

Janna Zwerner: Since being a student of Irwin Irving Zola at Brandeis University in 1973, she has worked her whole career in the disabilities field, which she described. She'd like the MCPD to become a Commission and have a more active role in the City.

Doug Sweet: He spoke to his history since the 1960's working in various settings including the 1981 Equal Opportunity Committee, 1993 Law School. Factors for Committee leadership include being very regular in attendance (which he has for 12 years), knowledge of disability laws and issues, and being articulate. Doug feels he is a process person and spoke about MCPD being able to do more.

There were several questions asked of the nominees. Barbara thanked everyone for their time responding to the Nominating Committee's questionnaire. It was agreed that the voting process would be that each member will vote for 2 candidates by January 23 by responding to Beverly via either email or phone. Members' votes will be confidential.

Bev addressed the "Statement of Mission and Organizational Structure" which was both emailed and mailed to all members. Lucie stated she had edits to it. Bev suggested for members to send all edits to Bev before the end of February so she could get the document back out to everyone before the March meeting, at which time the Committee would vote on it.

Discounts on Water & Sewerage

Barbara brought up the issue of discounts on water and sewerage not available to renters. If the MCPD would help advocate to the Aldermen about this issue, the City's law could be changed.

CDBG ACCESS PROJECTS REPORT for December by Lowell

This report was submitted to MCPD by email before this meeting for their review. Per usual it is copied here within the minutes. Lowell noted in his email that projects have been suspended for the winter months because the stormy weather in December stopped everything. Comments are noted at the end of this report.

- Accessible Pedestrian Signals (Project CD0703C. Expended, \$25,015; Budget balance: \$19,813) – *No change since last report.* The Committee has requested the installation of APS-10 audible pedestrian signals at the intersections of Walnut and Cabot, Beacon and Chestnut, and Adams and Watertown. The total estimated hardware costs for these three intersections is \$4,200—based on a cost of \$350 per pedestrian button. We have requested that the Department of Public Works pay the approximately \$1,200 for installation. Following a series of meetings, Acting Commissioner Dave Turocy agreed to find the money to pay for installation. Lowell has written Commissioner Turocy to confirm that the money will be found. Centre St. and Centre Ave. is a fourth priority intersection. Our hope is to initiate separate and independent crossing signals for the two streets, straighten the crosswalk across Centre St., and place the vehicle stop line before the crosswalk. The intersection would be best served by Polara Navigator signals because of ambient sound control and beaconing capabilities. Washington St. and Commonwealth Ave. is a fifth priority intersection. National Development and Newton-Wellesley Hospital have agreed to contribute \$90,000 toward improvements at that intersection. The Board of Aldermen voted to seek design recommendations from a consultant. Because the Purchasing Department is requiring that the consultant contract be bid, nothing will be determined until early in 2008. We are hoping that the project will include accessible pedestrian signals, preferably Polara Navigator signals.
- Wellington Park Access (Project CD0303C. Expended, \$5,411; Budget balance, \$0) – *No change since last report.* This project is a joint project using CDBG funds and Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds. The CDBG portion of the project is complete, except for the installation of benches. *[See the following project.]* It consists of an asphalt walkway providing an accessible route from the park entrance on Kilburn Street, past the basketball and tennis courts, then to the park entrance on Princess Road. *The CPA portion of the work was delayed because of a disagreement among residents regarding the location and surface material of additional walkways in the park. We have been told that the matter has been settled and all walkways will be constructed with asphalt surfaces to enhance accessibility. (Expected Date of Completion: Spring 2008)*
- Benches (Project CD0403C. Expended, \$0; Budget balance, \$3,000) – *No change since last report.* The current budget will be limited to installation of benches at Wellington Park when the construction of walkways in the park is completed. *(Expected Date of Completion: Spring 2008)*
- Curb Cuts (Project CD0803G. Expended, \$47,941; Budget Balance: \$134,887) – *No change since last report.* The Dept. of Public Works has finished its curb cut work until next spring. During the late summer and fall they completed 38 of the 62 curb cuts we had requested for installation. We've also recommended the removal of 10 poorly located and non-conforming curb cuts. Ironically, it was one week after construction ended when we finally received state approval to construct needed curb cuts at the intersection of Boylston St. and Hammond Pond Parkway. The approval process took a mere eight months. We are still expanding our list of curb cuts to be done in the 2008 construction season. Mayor's Committee members are encouraged to report priority locations for needed curb cuts. *(Expected Date of Completion: None. On-going work.)*
- Public Facilities and Parks Access (Project CD0703A. Expended, \$27,975; Budget balance, \$40,075, of which \$28,882 has yet to be committed.) – *No change since last report.* The first project that was completed under this budget was the construction of two sets of stairs and railings in Burr Park. The second project under this budget is the

construction of the accessible walkway from the Mason-Rice School parking lot to the planned accessible play area within the Newton Centre Playground. The project is being managed by the Dept. of Parks and Recreation and carried out by the Dept. of Public Works. *Work has been completed on the section of the walkway from the school parking lot to the brook.* The remaining portion of the walkway beyond the brook will be completed in 2008 following the installation of the new play area. There will be approximately \$28,882 remaining in this budget following the completion of the Newton Centre Playground walkway. *We can assign these remaining funds to a public facilities or parks project at any time.* There is a potential long-term request from the Dept. of Parks and Recreation for accessibility improvements at the Newton Highlands Playground and Upper Falls Playground. (EDC: none)

- FY08 Uncommitted Funds (Project CD0803A. Budget balance, \$61,470) – *This represents funds available for project(s) to be determined.* Because of the on-going need for accessible curb cuts, this budget is a logical source for applying to future curb cut construction, but other projects can be considered.

Lowell noted that while this is his last MCPD meeting, he will still be available for questions as he'll be working in the Planning Department two days/week dealing exclusively with human service and emergency shelter grant projects. Amy Yuhasz will attend the MCPD meeting, filling in for Lowell, until a new staff person is hired to take over the access projects.

Final Business

It was noted that Heather presented a great working Audible Pedestrian Signal plan for Washington Street and Commonwealth Avenue to Clint Schuckel but he has not yet responded. Amy is meeting with him soon. There was some discussion of traffic flow.

Lowell thanked the Committee and expressed his support for the Committee becoming a Commission.

Doug reminded members to continue to monitor areas with problems and to bring those areas to our attention.

Jason recommended that we use funding to support APS and move these important issues forward.

There was a motion to adjourn at 9:25pm.

The next meeting will be Wednesday, February 20 at 6:30pm in the cafeteria.

(Note the change of the meeting date due to the Feb. 18 holiday.)