

Houston Commission on Disabilities

September 12th, 2024, 4:00 – 5:00 PM

The Houston Commission on Disabilities is a **virtual meeting only**.
The meeting is streamed on the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities Facebook page.

Chair Silcox asked Stephanie Haechten to proceed with the roll call.

Roll Call of the Commissioners:

Position 1: Michael Cottingham	Present
Position 2: Caitlin Conner	Present
Position 3: Ann M. Bacon	Absent
Position 4: Katie Crouch	Present
Position 5: Sashikala Nisankarao	Present
Position 6: Monique Mason	Absent
Position 7: Adam Farris	Present
Position 8: Amie Jean	Absent
Position 9: Mary Sias	Present
Position 10: Meridith Silcox – Chair	Present
Position 11: Lydia Nunez Landry	Absent (RSVPed beforehand)
Position 12: Melisa Rosario-Diaz	Present
Position 13: Osvaldo Capmany	Present
Position 14: Adele Henry	Present
Ex-Officio: Angel Ponce	Present
Ex-Officio: Marshall Watson	Present
Legal: Rebekah Wendt	Absent

Chair Silcox called the meeting to order at 4:04 PM with a quorum present and welcomed attendees to the meeting.

MOPD Staff: Angel Ponce, Stephanie Haechten, John Serrano, Rey Herrera, Amanda Boyd

Metropolitan Multiservice Center Staff: Chuck French

Review and Approval of April Meeting Minutes

Motion: Commissioner Nisankarao

Second: Commissioner Sias

Abstain: Capmany, Farris, Henry, Rosario-Diaz, Couch, Conner

Public Comments

- HPD Officer John Stroble
 - o Proud Houstonian and father of a 3yo with Autism Spectrum Disorder.
 - o Family was impacted from the significant layoffs through Texas Children's Hospital
 - o Grateful for support from MOPD and Autism Speaks; Houston media also provided specific support to getting the word out to the community
 - o Questions/Comments from Commissioner Farris, Henry, and Connor
 - Follow up with where the system and decisions were made with TCH that negatively impacted families.
 - Commission to make comments to the Administration regarding advocacy and legislations.

MOPD Report to the HCOD

Angel Ponce (Director, Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities)

- Congratulations to all the new Commissioners
- MOPD Operations
 - o Sissel Carlsen has moved to a new role with the Department of Neighborhoods
 - o Hiring for the Community Liaison position in the next 2-3 months.
- Information and Referral Services
 - o Served over 2,906 constituents through case management and outreach
 - o Participated in 81 community outreach engagements
- Accessible Communications
 - o Storm recovery has been an important part of our communications the last few months
 - o Facebook over 1,400 followers; Instagram 1,000 followers
 - o Please sign up for the MOPD newsletter
- ADA Self-Evaluation
 - o Still in Phase 1; conducting digital survey
 - o We will send a detailed update by the end of the year.
- Events
 - o Houston Disability Celebration Friday (9/20) at MMSC from 9am-1pm, lunch will be provided

MMSC Report to the HCOD

Charles French (Facilities Administrator, MMSC and the Division Manager for Adaptive Sports)

- Welcome new commissioners! We look forward to working with you.
- Fall Programs have kicked off and I recognize Hannah Walker and Nolan Griffin for their recruitment for our youth adapted sports.
- Ongoing maintenance issues with 40 work orders, nothing that is pressing but all important pieces.
- Pool is open, building is open!
- We have hired a FT lifeguard that started a few weeks ago.
- Thank you to Chester Price, who was with MMSC for four years and has recently resigned.
- Angel Ponce shared that conversations around renovations for MMSC are ongoing with the new Administrator.
- No update from surveys and discussion with organizations
- 13th Annual Metal and Muscle Expo on 10/26-27 GRB, Hall A

ADA Update

Marshall Watson (Administrative Coordinator – ADA, City of Houston, Human Resources Department, Civil Service & EEO Division)

- Marshall receives ADA related calls and emails within the City and reports quarterly to HCOD
- Calls (2nd quarter) 15 calls-construction related, occupancy ADA requirements, ADA repairs, ADA restrooms not being compliant, parking concerns
- 30 reasonable accommodation requests: 10 were approved, 10 were denied, 3 still pending
- Comments/Questions from Commissioners:
 - o Commissioner Cottingham had concern regarding sidewalk - if it was homeowner's responsibility or the City's
 - Director Ponce: John Serrano will work with Commissioner Cottingham to discuss PAR program

New Commissioner Introduction:

Adam Ferris
Caitlin Conner
Adele Henry
Melisa Rosario-Diaz
Katie Crouch

Committee Updates

- None at this time. Committees will be chosen during the October meeting.

Voting information

- Election day is Thursday, November 5th, deadline to register is Oct. 7th
- Voting questions: 713-755-6965
- Discrimination/complaint regarding voting: Harrisvote.com

Meeting Schedule

- October 10th (In person) with focus on accessible voting
- November 14th (In person) Orientation

Commissioners will receive an email with handbook updates. Please work with Hilary Pircher on headshots and biographies.

Chair Silcox motions to adjourn meeting.
Commissioner Henry seconds.
Meeting closes at 5:03 PM.

Meeting Minutes recorded by Stephanie Haechten,
stephanie.haechten@houstontx.gov. Please email any corrections.