

Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities
Minutes for June 11, 2009

Present – Members: Eileen Keegan Bongiorno, JoAnn Haas, Kate Patton Regal, Gordon Slater (Youth Ambassador), Don Summerfield, Kathy Watkins, Dave Wood; Alternates: Bet MacArthur; David Peterson; Staff: Michael Muehe, Carolyn Thompson

Absent – Larry Braman, Laura Brelsford, Dave Krebs, Owen O’Riordan, Rachel Tanenhaus,

Guests – Miriam Cooper

Introductions – **Dave Wood** welcomed guests, including Miriam Cooper who has just moved to Cambridge.

Minutes – The Minutes for May 14, 2009 were approved.

Announcements – The Dept. of Public Health (DPH) has organized some focus groups to discuss issues related to a flu pandemic. One of these meetings will be on June 27 at 9:30 am in Cambridge at a yet to be determined location. Piers Park Sailing Center is hosting an Inclusive Sports Day on Saturday, June 20 from 10 am to 3 pm. Donald Summerfield reported that he had presented information on the value of speech therapy for people with brain injuries at BU Sargent College of Health and Rehabilitation.

Public Works Report – Kathy Watkins gave a brief update of ongoing sidewalk and roadway work. [See attachment.]

Disability 911 and Reverse 911 Calls – George Fosque, Director of Emergency Communications for Cambridge, provided information about how the City handles emergency 911 calls and the use of the 911 Indicator Form for people with disabilities. The Emergency Communications Department staffs a 24/7 dispatch service 365 days a year. They handle over 200 police and EMS calls a day. The person who calls 911 is always asked for their location and a call back number in case they get disconnected. Even if someone hangs up, the 911 operator will call back to make sure the person does not need assistance. If there is no voice on the other end, the operator has a standard set of questions and instructions to try to determine the nature of the situation. 911 operators can also communicate with people using a TTY.

People with disabilities can fill out a 911 Indicator Form that lets the emergency dispatch operator know that an individual residing at that address has a disability that may hinder communication or mobility. This is a voluntary program; the information is confidential and will only appear at the dispatcher’s location when a 911 call originates from that person’s address. Links to the information and application to enroll in this program is available at <www.cambridgema.gov/ECD/> pr call CCPD at 617-349-4692. Having this information in advance can facilitate rescue operations.

There are Reverse 911 calls that the City can make in certain circumstances. This is a vendor driven service that has nothing to do with emergencies. These calls are recorded messages that are sent through an automated system to all residential phone numbers in a given geographic area. They have been used by the City to alert residents to street cleaning schedules and to the ordinance regarding snow and ice removal from sidewalks adjacent to their property. The problem with the current system is that the database of phone numbers is not up to date so that not everyone in a specified area will receive a call, and people who have moved out of Cambridge but kept the same number receive irrelevant calls. The City is looking for a replacement system with more accurate information.

Chair's Report – In the absence of Rachel Tanenhaus, Dave Wood chaired the meeting. He presented to the Commission the possibility of skipping one of the monthly meetings this summer as has often been done in the past. A MOTION was made and seconded for the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities not to meet in August. The Motion PASSED. The next two meetings will be on July 9 and on Sept. 10, 2009.

Disability Reframed: A Community Film Series – Bet MacArthur reported that we had a good turnout of 40+ people for the screening of *Edward Scissorhands*, the first film in this new series. Afterwards, John Kelly facilitated a lively discussion of the iconic images and disability related themes in the movie. Bet thanked the City for helping fund the license to show this first film. The committee will look into possible grants to fund future screenings. The film series committee will communicate by email about a date, time, venue and film for the next screening. Email your suggestions to Bet MacArthur at <arenagroup@comcast.net>.

Executive Director's Report – Michael Muehe reported that the Commission had received and accepted a letter of resignation from board member, Susan Ellis Holland. He expressed for the whole Commission our appreciation for her service and that she will be greatly missed. As Susan said in her letter, much has happened in the four years since she was first appointed to the Commission. At that time she was at home with two toddlers; now they are both in school and she is working. She needs to optimize the time they have in the afternoon and evenings to be together.

Michael gave updates on a variety of projects and issues. He, Kathy Watkins and Don Summerfield attended the U.S. Access Board meeting in Boston on May 28. The accessible carousel on the Cambridge Common playground has already been installed. This was partially funded by one of the N.O.D. award money grants. Michael will let Commission members know when the dedication ceremony is to be. The Commission has just received a copy of the public service announcement about the CCPD that was videotaped last month. It will be airing on CCTV for the next month or two. In regard to the letter that CCPD sent to the Harvest Coop about providing some seating to customers who need to rest, Michael will be meeting with Daniel Goldstein from the Clear Conscience Café and Mike St. Clair, manager of the Harvest Coop. With the assistance of the Cambridge Fire Department the city now has a new fire box pedestal of the appropriate height to meet all the access regulations. It was difficult to find a manufacturer /vendor with the appropriate product. The City will soon begin replacing existing pedestals with the accessible ones. On the topic of snow removal from sidewalks this past winter, Michael reported that Traffic, Parking and Transportation issued 700 tickets and Department of Public Works issued 356 tickets to property owners for failure to remove snow and ice in a timely manner. That is nearly twice as many citations as compared to the winter of 07-08. Our increased vigilance is working! JoAnn Haas suggested that this coming winter it might help to put an insert, a "buck slip," reminding residents about snow removal in with their yearly tax bills.

The River Festival will be on Saturday, June 13 from noon to 6 pm. Commission members were reminded of their shifts and Carolyn handed out a map of the area. We have another grant request for funds from the N.O.D. award money to review. The ad hoc Review Committee will plan to meet on Monday, June 16. The Employment NOW statewide coalition will meet at 1 pm on Friday, June 19 at the Citywide Senior Center. Anyone particularly interested in employment issues for people with disabilities is welcome to attend.

Disability Project Coordinator's Report – Carolyn Thompson said that the Commission's mailing to religious congregations in Cambridge went out on June 4, 2009. On Tuesday, June 23, Carolyn will be presenting information about disability and access at the Mayor's monthly Clergy Breakfast.

Public Input – One of the guests asked how audible pedestrian signals get installed in Cambridge. Michael described how this is a request-driven system, how the Commission works with the Dept. of Traffic, Parking and Transportation on these decisions and plans, and the consideration given to primarily residential areas where pedestrian and vehicular traffic are not heavy in the evenings.

New Business – David Peterson reported that after a 5-year effort by Mothers Against Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (MAME), the National Institute of Health (NIH) has finally agreed to video cast the proceedings of the national CFS Advisory Committee beginning May 27, 2009. This means that these proceedings will now be accessible to people with disabilities who cannot travel to Washington, D.C., For the NIH video cast website go to, <<http://videocast.nih.gov>> and look for CFSAC in the list of meetings. The link to the meeting will be enabled when the meeting begins. The videos will also be archived online so they can be viewed at a later date. Please note: you will need RealPlayer to view the video cast.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Carolyn Thompson