

Houston Commission on Disabilities

February 13th, 2025, 4:00 – 6:00 PM

The Houston Commission on Disabilities meets on the 2nd Thursday of every month at Houston TranStar (6922 Katy Road). 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 (Virtual)
Position 6: Monique Mason	Present
Position 7: Adam Farris	Absent
Position 8: Amie Jean	Present
Position 9: Mary Sias	Absent
Position 10: Meridith Silcox – Chair	Present
Position 11: Lydia Nunez Landry	Absent
Position 12: Melisa Rosario-Diaz	Present
Position 13: Osvaldo Capmany	Present (Virtual)
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, Amanda Boyd, Norma Medrano, Kimberly Blanchard, Anataja Harris

Metropolitan Multiservice Center Staff: Chuck French

Announcements

- HCOD will be meeting 6 times this year
 - o April, June, August, October
 - o Closed meeting session in November

Review and Approval of January Meeting Minutes

Motion: Commissioner

Second: Commissioner

Public Comments

- JFS, ReelAbilities (Abbie Markowitz, ReelAbilities Festival Coordinator)
 - o Kicked off last week
 - o Arts & Film Festival Feb 2nd -23rd (Free with the exception of ReelPeople)
 - o ReelAbilitiesHouston.org for more information
- Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo (Kyle Olsen and Danielle Grossman)
 - o Created sensory friendly space for every show
 - o 2 sensory friendly rooms
 - o Livestreaming for ASL every night
 - o Closed captioning on video boards and app

Guest Speakers- Legislative Priorities & Advocacy

Ron Lucey (Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities)

- Proud of great work happening in Houston
 - o Report shown identifies top 40 priorities
 - o Houston Commission on Disabilities is one of the oldest committees- over 70 years
 - o 10 Policy issues- Access, communication, criminal justice, education, emergency management, employment, housing, transportation, veterans, criminal justice system
 - o ESA/Service animal confusions: ESA is not a trained animal- making recommendation to clean up HR code
 - o 40 proposals to the legislator

- TOP ONES: Increase pay for personal care attendance, allowing family members to be paid caregivers, expanding TDA do not hire registry, increasing certified interpreters pay rate
- o Hopeful adult changing tables will be accessible at large spaces such as movies, stadiums, etc.

Lauren Gerken (Texas Council on Developmental Disabilities)

- TCDD overview:
 - o TCDD'S Public Policy Priorities- employment, accessibility, funding for services, health and safety, early childhood and inclusive education, attendant wages and training
 - o TCDD's Resources-provides regular updates during legislative sessions, bill of the week, @txcdd on Instagram, Texas legislative YouTube playlist
 - o Where to start- to find legislators who represent you, visit <https://wrm.capitol.texas.gov/home>

Sabrina Gonzalez Saucedo (The Arc of Texas)

- Policy pillars:
 - o Quality of Life
 - o Civil Rights & Justice
 - o Integrated Employment
 - o Inclusive Education
 - o Advocacy resources -have a Heart for the Arc 2/14 email or mail your elected officials

MOPD Report to the HCOD

MMSC Report to the HCOD

Chuck French (Recreation Specialist, MMSC)

- Held stakeholder meetings at MMSC this week to discuss language for trails, universal design and accommodate as many people as possible
- Chuck sent MMSC calendar to MOPD to share
- Upcoming meeting with council members and Parks dept. for security concern at MMSC

- Urban Park Rangers are arriving during opening hours and closing hours
- Contractors have repaired gates at MMSC

ADA Update

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

- 2 calls related to sidewalks
- 1 apt modification
- 1 barrier removal
- 2 housing assistance
- 4 reasonable accommodation requests

Committee Updates:

- Community Housing
- Education
- Emergency Preparedness

Chair Silcox motions to adjourn meeting.

Meeting closes at **6:05 PM**.

Meeting Minutes recorded by Amanda Boyd; Amanda.Boyd@houstontx.gov.
Please email any corrections.