

Houston Commission on Disabilities

April 10th, 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 proceeded with the roll call.

Stephanie Haechten went over housekeeping items

Roll Call of the Commissioners:

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

Chair Silcox called the meeting to order at **4:06 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

- Will not be meeting in May, there will be meeting in June
 - o Have been meeting with committees separately

Review and Approval of February Meeting Minutes

Motion: Commissioner

Second: Commissioner Amie Jean

Public Comments

- Madelyn Traylor, VAST Academy (Success Coach)
- Lauren Huffman (Eagles Club President)
 - o VAST is an inclusive secondary education training for students, Director Ponce is on advisory board
 - o Focus: readiness and academic skills
 - o Launching: Pathway Bridge to Careers- individuals who want to continue their education at HCC

Guest Speakers- Emergency Preparedness & Hurricane Season

Ruth Tovar (Public Information Officer, Office of Emergency Management)

- Initiatives for hurricane season
 - o Does not only respond to national disasters but also potential security events
 - o Added accessibility control button on website
 - o Website has tips, encourages people to sign up for STEAR, 6 different languages (English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, Arabic, French)
- Data: Reached out to STEAR registrants in January
 - o All registrants were called for a wellness check
 - o 1,727 registrants, 253 did confirm contact, 1474 were not reached
- o Always need constant support from the state of Texas
- o Commission recommended FAQ section to go on website and gave recommendations to website changes, headlining color, color contrast, etc.

Jackie Miller (Sr. Staff Analyst, Mayor's Office of Public Safety & Homeland Security)

- May 17 Disaster Readiness Clinic & Expo
- Speakers, Pannels, activities for kids, support organizations
- Angel Ponce invites Jackie to speak about event at next Metro board meeting next week

Sabrina Gonzalez Saucedo (The Arc of Texas)

- Policy pillars:
 - Quality of Life
 - Civil Rights & Justice
 - Integrated Employment
 - Inclusive Education
 - Advocacy resources –Have a Heart for the Arc 2/14 email or mail your elected officials (Helps tell elected officials on Valentine's Day to have a heart for the Arc)

MOPD Report to the HCOD

Angel Ponce (Director, MOPD)

- Join the Office of Council Member Abbie Kamin along with the Houston Parks and Recreation Department and Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities for an in-person community input event at the MMSC ON Wednesday, April 23rd, 2025 5:30pm - 7:30pm at 1475 West Gray Street
- The Houston Efficiency Study is the City's effort to restore trust in how our city government works for its citizens. The goal of the study was also to help the Whitmire administration in strategic Decision making and creating of a way to mitigate risks, and improve the city's overall operational efficiency, effectiveness and service delivery. <https://www.houstontx.gov/efficiencystudy/>
- Due to the City of Houston hiring freeze, MOPD has had to supplement the duties of the Sr. Staff Analyst who worked on our accessible infrastructure work. Kimberly Blanchard has been has taken on some of those roles with the assistance of the Houston Public Works Dept.

MMSC Report to the HCOD

Chuck French (Recreation Specialist, MMSC)

- Happy to hear expansion renovation plans for MMSC are meeting again
- Chuck sent MMSC calendar to MOPD mail with QR code
- Lifeguard positions are in limbo due to hiring freeze
- Security concerns updates: purchase order was completed to have gates and fences repaired, park rangers will clear out MMSC of overnight campers and unhoused individuals

ADA Update

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

- Will hear from Marshall in June

Committee Updates:

- Community Housing
- Education
- Emergency Preparedness
 - Students from St. Thomas have been working with Commissioner Conner to see where the gaps are, biggest thing is collecting data regarding access to emergency preparedness
 - Students have been working on this data. 6 attended the HCOD meeting.
 - Students would like to present data at June HCOD meeting
- Meeting invite will be sent to discuss shift in committees
- Committee has been working on some ideas and building out ideas/resources that they can put together for the community

Chair Silcox motions to adjourn meeting.

Meeting closes at **5:21 PM**.

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