



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
DEPARTMENT of RACIAL and SOCIAL JUSTICE
KATJANA BALLANTYNE, MAYOR

COMMISSION FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

12 September 2023

Regularly Monthly Meeting

Commissioners:

Adrienne Pomeroy, Staff Liaison, ADA Coordinator
Holly Simione, Chair
Harriotte Ranvig
Pauline Downing
Deborah Haber
Katie Milton
Brian C. Postlewaite, Secretary, Director of Engineering

Assoc. Commissioners:

Frank Lee

Guests:

Ben Ewen-Campen, Ward 2 Councilor
Henry Edward Hardy
Nicole Cannon
Helen Corrigan
Jamie, Close Captioner

Note: Due to COVID-19 Shutdown, all attendees were remote via Zoom Meeting.

General:

- Nicole Cannon:
 - Interested in becoming a member of the Commission
 - Is a mother of a child with a disability, which includes using a walker
 - Surprised to find no inclusive playgrounds in the City.
 - Spoken with PSUF and the Kennedy School
 - Worried that students with disabilities are being left out during playground activities
 - Interested in advocating for more inclusive playgrounds
- Helen Corrigan:
 - Applied to be a member of the Commission
 - Was on the Commission from 1985-1995
 - Was the liaison between the Commission and the Board of Alderman
 - Worried about how long the appointment process takes since she applied in August

Reports:

- Adrienne, ADA Coordinator:
 - Strives to respond to communications within 24-48 hours, providing the priority and/or urgency of the correspondence is helpful
 - Working to create hybrid meetings scheduled in the auditorium at the Central Library; since library closes at 9pm, we should have 6:30pm to 8pm meetings
 - VOTE: Holly moves hybrid meetings to be 7pm to 8:30pm, seconded by Pauline, unanimously approved
- Holly, Chair:
 - Anti-bias training will be held soon, which all Commissioners must attend.
- Harriotte, Vice Chair:
 - The City now has an embosser, and we are working to get it installed and staff trained for its operations
 - Working with RSJ and IT staff to improve website legibility for people with disabilities; no improvements yet

New Business:

- Councilor Ben Ewen-Campen:

- Presenting Bicycle Traffic Safety Improvements Resolution
- Interested in proposing the Idaho Stop, which allows cyclists to yield at stop signs, and stop then proceed when clear on red lights
- Concerned that Somerville Police Department (SPD) have been excessively enforcing stop signs and red lights on cyclists
- Federal studies show ID stop is safer for motorists, cyclists, and no more dangerous for pedestrians
- The Council's resolution can't change state law, but might be able to redirect SPD enforcement
- Holly, concerned that right on red can be dangerous for pedestrians
 - Clr. Ewen-Campen, street design improvements should improve this
 - Brian, right on red is currently legal without ID stop law, the City is also working on standards to determine where No Right on Red signs should be posted
- Pauline, concerned that cyclists are so quiet that if they don't stop a blind person could be at risk in a cross walk
 - Clr. Ewen-Campen, believes other cities have solved this concern, and will look for the answer
- Pauline, asked how bike lanes interact with HP spaces and bus stops
 - Clr. Ewen-Campen, believes there are solutions that we can find to meet both goals
- Harriotte, it is the responsibility of cyclists to yield and stop for pedestrians, it is hard for blind pedestrians to trust cyclists to stop
 - Clr. Ewen-Campen, agrees that it is difficult prevent bad cyclists from behaving poorly, but he believes improved street design could substantially improve these situations
- Holly, Chair:
 - Proposes another sports trip to promote accessibility, considering a Celtics game,
 - The Red Sox Game cost about \$3,000
 - The Commission's parking fund income is approximately \$3-8,000 per month
 - VOTE: Holly moves \$4,000 for Celtics game, approximately 30 tickets, Harriotte seconded

- Adrienne reminds the Commission that we have a fiduciary responsibility for all funds expended, and that Ed Bean and the IRS reviews all expenditures
- All in favor, except Deborah abstained and Katie was absent, Passes.

Old Business:

- Accessible Parking Funds:
 - Suggestions for funding projects:
 - Signs on Community Path to remind cyclists to ring or announce when passing, which is important for people with hearing and vision disabilities
 - Events that help people with disabilities share their lived experiences, such as speak outs, open mics, movies, etc
 - Provide additional, but unrequired, items to parks and playgrounds, such as pictorial sign boards for non-verbal children
 - Provide enrichment activities similar to what the Council on Aging does, but for younger people with disabilities, such as accessible yoga
 - Accessible outdoor gym

Motion to Adjourn Meeting at 9:06 pm; approved unanimously.