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CITY OF SOMERVILLE
Somerville Commission for Persons with Disabilities

City of Somerville Commission of People with Disabilities Meeting

January 14, 2025
7:00 – 9:30 PM (ET)
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>> ADRIENNE: Okay everyone it is 7:02. Yeah! We are here!
Hello everyone. It is weird, I am trying to figure it out ...

>> [Recording in progress]

>> ADRIENNE: Yes you may (talking to someone off mic)
This is Holly Simione, Chair of the committee and persons with disabilities.

If you can say "here," "present," or unmute please so we can verify we have quorum.

Harriet?

>> Here.

>> Michael Saps?

>> Here.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Colleen?

>> Here.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Deborah?

>> Here.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE:
Nick?

Ingrid?

Did you say that Ingrid. ...

>> She just sent me a text. I have not responded.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Sheila?

Helen?

Murshid?

>> MURSHID: Present.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Thank you. Laurie is not here tonight. I am here. That is ... eight members present. So we have met quorum.

Do you want to briefly touch on ... This piece?

I was notified. I did not know ...

>> It would not have been enough time to notify you anyway.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Even through email?

I don't know.

>> There would not have been enough time to notify you.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: I trust you.

>> So, I'm Brian Postlewaite, the director of engineering for six years now. I have been a member of the commission, my second term expired end of December. So I am no longer officially a member of the commission. That is my understanding of what the city clerk has said.

I served as the administration's appointment to the commission. Last fall, three months ago, I told the administration they needed to start working on a new appointment. It sounds like there is progress that. And that should be finalized hopefully, fingers crossed, in time for the next meeting.

In between them, you should expect communication from Kimberly Hatter (phonetic) on any announcements or specific plans. But it is not my place to give their news.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Okay. So should we be around the room, to see if anybody else would like to introduce themselves here?

And then we can go online?

>> Sure my name is Nicky. I am the ADA field associate for the engineering department.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Thank you.

>> (off mic) GBH News in Boston (off mic), here to learn and listen.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Meghan, we do speak a little louder.

>> My name is Megan. I am a reporter at GBH news in Boston and a cover disability and accessibility I am here to learn to see what is going on and see ... Thank you.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Thank you.

>> Hi everyone, my name is Caitlin-- a member of the commission for women and I met Holley and (indiscernible) at an event over the weekend and they asked I joined, and to see where our audit is intersected.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Like you could join us so quickly. And Frank?

We have Frank here as well. I did not do a complete call I should apologize Frank. Frank is here. Ingrid is here. Wonderful. Happy new year to everybody.

Who else?

Latoya is here as described.

>> We are very grateful for your assistance.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: And Henry thank you for being here also.

Looks like Michael is standing.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: I'm going to go back and start by reading the agenda and let Harriotte kickoff the norms.

>> MICHAEL: I wanted to make sure I said this before we meet tonight. Brian you were a pleasure to work with. We are absolutely going to miss you and your thoughts. And your presence. And just amazing. Thank you.

>> Michael, that is so nice of you to say to the chair. So nice of you to say.

>> MICHAEL: To the chair.

>> I am sure this will not be the last you will see of me. I know Nikki will be spending a lot of time because the engineering division still need to be a part of this commission. At least from an operational standpoint, and the communication standpoint. So you will see us from time to time.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Thank you Michael.

>> Just a minute ... (off mic)

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: I'm going to briefly read the agenda.

We are going to have Harriotte review our meeting norms, expectations, and success factors.

We are not going to be going over minutes tonight. I will explain that as we move through the agenda.

We will then give it to Harriotte, talking about collaboration, communication, and accessibility meeting updates.

And then we have several communications from the chair.

At that point it will be 7:30 PM. I will hand it over to Adrienne Pomeroy to give an update for a report to the commission.

And then from there we will move on to update from our core projects, and any groups that have anything they would like to share, or get feedback on, or have questions and after that at 8:15 PM will move on to a riveting update from Sheila on our finances.

And then we will hit the main event at about 8:35 PM and talk about our goals and project and put pen and paper and months and start talking about what we will be doing this coming year. Any questions?

Just a reminder please don't put anything in the chat. If you have a question raise your hand, only because it is not accessible and none of us are involved in looking at the chat to be able to respond to that. Ms. Harriotte, you have the floor.

>> HARRIOTTE: Our communication norms are well known. Please state your name before you speak each time, which not only helped me as a blind listener, but also for transcription.

Secondly, remember to raise or wave your hand if you want to speak. And we will go according to sequence I believe.

And also to simply have that normal courtesy of listening completely until someone is finished. Which means we will not have to manage crosstalk. All of a sudden many, many Zoom meetings in the chaos that break out can be pretty awful.

(indiscernible) from the CCA.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Maybe we can add it in that, that sentence. Thank you Harriotte.

October and December, there were two October meetings. There was an issue with the mailing and delivery of the embossed materials. For that reason we are going to hold off on approving both minutes. However we will be mapping out a plan on how we are going to get through all of the outstanding minutes, and if it is not done during this meeting, it will be communicated in an email. We may have to add additional meetings just to review minutes. But we are going to make sure that there's plenty of time for embossing materials I don't want to give away your big ta-dah, Harriotte will display later and will extend visually what is embossed for someone who is reading embossed documents. So on to you Harriotte again.

We are a little behind schedule. You do you.

This is the red information for voters' manuals that we all get. And...

>> HARRIOTTE: A few interesting things. A sighted person will probably not (indiscernible), huge volumes are equivalent of that document. Should we separate them?

And pull them out?

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: I am doing a terrible Vanna White, trying to get it into the box of the video.

>> I think it is difficult. Maybe I need to see ... I don't know. Anyway you can see that this information for voters is pretty thin. You can see that the braille is not just one volume, it takes up two volumes.

>> HARRIOTTE: I would also add that it says imprint I believe at the bottom of the front page, this is one of two volumes. This is two of two volumes. I believe the booklet for

the rest of us sighted companions and the city... I don't know the exact date but I think it was revised 4-6 weeks before election date.

And we didn't even know there will be a braille one. When I went to vote ...

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Let me add that. With did bring that to the attention to our liaison and ADA coordinator and you most graciously at the very last minute did have those delivered to us.

>> HARRIOTTE: That is right.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: So thank you for doing that.

>> We do want to note for everyone's knowledge white estate partners with a national brand press and through Perkins, to distribute to residents of Massachusetts who are in need. They don't proactively send them to municipal polling locations; other municipal polling locations that request them as we did, or individual residents have to request them. And not to take away from Harriotte, they only include they are ballot questions which I don't know if it happens every year... Every other year.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE:
City specific.

>> These are the state ballot questions so the City of Somerville had a ballot question number six, but it was not deemed (indiscernible).

>> HARRIOTTE: I went to the voting, the polls near my house in Davis Square. I asked to see the volumes. And they brought one out, and right on front it said volume 1 of 2; I was imagining, I mean I was imagining what time it would take to read this volume while standing at the polls.

And I am so appreciative that it exists at all. That the city was able to ask for and my question then would be Secretary Galvin (phonetic). How is your ordinary resident? Don't you even know it exists?

I know for myself; I am not a great web user. I am in the white hair plane. People who do not use the web.

So that is one thing.

Then we went to another polling place, just curious to see if anybody else had volume 2. I think we went to three or four places. And finally found volume 2 at the West library, which was very interesting.

When I went to the various all in places, I would say excuse me, as if anyone else come in who is blind?

And every time it was a "no." That answers my question. How will they know it exists?

So I am hoping at the next opportunity will do better with this.

Another thing that was really unfortunate is they did not have the municipal questions in the embossed stuff. Again why would anybody know that?

You see this monster volume. So that is what embossing is.

We have been getting it from Perkins. And we do indeed have a very own embossed... And understand there is a training coming up for RSJ staff the 22nd of this month. And Frank will also be part of that training.

>> Yes.

>> HARRIOTTE: We are making steps in the right direction and it is like what you don't know about what you don't know until you know. this is something we are working with. Just trying to think. One or more two more things.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: We can come back to that. We still need to announce that Adrienne at the last minute did arrange for these to be delivered. How they were delivered and not realize they did not have all the copies, this is just information for us to take, and to prepare for the next election. And I think it ties off with a lot of what we will be talking about as far as goals in communications and pushing out as a commission on disabilities to the disabled residents in Somerville. These are the things that are available and giving them more information. And knowing ahead of time that there are ballot questions.

Is there a way to get these sooner to people?

And again that will be a little more research on our part. But I think we are thankful we have these. I am not sure Frank, if you can tell what it looks like inside.

>> FRANK: The cameras are not very good.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: What is important is to see this, these dots.

Each letter is a specific combination of six dots. You are scanning by hand and read letter of every word, of every sentence, in every book. And it is time consuming, even if you are-- like your speed reader Pauline, are you a speed reader?

>> PAULINE: Not a speed reader, but I am pretty fast.

>> HARRIOTTE: I think you are underestimating. We are doing our best to work with people who work on the website. Or some of them. And they have diligently been working on it.

Unfortunately, one of the things that few people know is that websites that are already built -- If you put on little stick on accessibility bits and pieces, it often breaks the site in

the worst way for the visually impaired person to find or do a search or find something in the calendar.

We have also been working as a commission creating more easily accessible websites, which may in part begin to solve the issue of people not knowing about all the important things that could be available to them.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Do I have any hands raised Holly?

We're going to move on. Thank you very much Harriotte.

The first item under communications from the chair is a City of Somerville Commission of People with Disabilities communications plan.

It is very difficult to write an agenda and know how you're going to flow through things. But imagine that I was discussing the communication plan after we talked about other communication items that are listed on this agenda. But I think there is enough information and projects and opportunities within how people find us, and how we communicate that we should develop formal communication plan.

In order to do that we need a small group who is willing to work outside of these hours, and report back as we do on matters of parking, mental health, legislative matters and education.

I am not going to ask for volunteers to jump out of their seats. I am not going to point to anyone but if anyone has any questions or comments about the deed that was not spoken tonight, who would like to share about creating a communication plan-- this is something I have done before. I can help develop this. But basically having a plan that includes what we do on particular months, having a plan, how do we communicate out to other people?

How do we receive information in?

Ms. Deborah?

>> DEBORAH: My former job when I was still working was in membership and marketing. I would be happy to serve on any type of communication group.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Woo! Thank you very much. You are always a working person; human we do not have a badge, or an ID. Thank you so much Deborah.

Are you volunteering Ms. Harriotte?

So we'll talk about that a little bit later on.

I want to make sure that we don't skip anything that is on here for now.

I did just mention the website. And you mentioned the website also, about having accessibility and we ... at multiple times brought to the city staff in different departments the need to have a different website, website that is accessible and is written in our words. We have had incredible assistance last July from the city's communications department as far as pushing out events and such. But we need to take that piece and move it forward. And things that are current and where people can reach us on the website is really important.

And I am going to shift to adjust quickly to the next item. Because it will tie back to the website.

I, Harriotte, Sheila and Helen sat down with the mayor.

>> HARRIOTTE: December.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: In December, thank you. We spoke with her on a few different subjects. And it was really just to get a check in, something I had done a while ago looking for her support, looking for her guidance, new to this role. Explaining my background and why I wanted to be part of the commission.

One thing we tested with her on the laptop was typing the word "disability," "disabled," "commission." Not from Google but from our website to see what comes up. In trying if you were someone who had never sort of was looking for help, how could they find that there was a commission made up of persons almost entirely who have disabilities-- unique disabilities-- that you can talk to. And that ties back to having changes in the website.

And some of these changes were never asked before. There's a lot of (indiscernible) in the city. But there is now a relation that there is a plan in place to bring the ... Website up to certain standards. And I think that we should discuss as a group, having a consultant build us a website that is from scratch fully compliant.

Like you said there is no way to put things on top of each other. And so I would like to throw that out for some discussion amongst the members.

>> SHEILA: You mean separate from the city's.

>> We would have to tap into new technologies.

>> HARRIOTTE: Using a consultant who has the resume to actually tell us, show was even the way they will build a website. It would be proof of what we need to get started.

And building and having a consultant who has already proven, would make all the difference in the world. I think. Because it is like, from my experience ...

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Hold on one second (someone opened their Mic)
Pardon me, go ahead.

>> HARRIOTTE: Anyway I think this is a really important piece. The work to include all individuals with disabilities who live in the city, visit the city, or move to Somerville.

I am very excited about that, getting that work through.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Sure. Michael?

>> MICHAEL: I definitely would say that we need something like that. Even at my age, I am still learning new things that people are putting on to websites. For instance for people who are blind, they are putting descriptions for what is in pictures, so when it is right they will know what is in there. I've never heard of that until a few months ago.

And so there are so many new things happening. But I also believe-- and there are other city websites that have this-- where they have other pages that like we can have subsets, mental health resources, or blind resources and have different pages where we can put things on.

I just think that it is really important to make it not only usable but functional. And something that people are actually going to want to use.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Thank you Michael. Deborah?

>> DEBORAH: yes ...

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Sorry out of order.

I will come right back to you Ingrid. Sorry.

>> DEBORAH: I have done multiple websites in the past for organizations. It is very important that we know what we want to put on your website before we hire a consultant. So they are able to give us a full scope of what we are doing.

I also think that when we start planning for a budget for this, we are going to need to budget for somebody who is doing ongoing work, so that as we have new events and new resources and so on, we are continuing updating the website. We cannot have an effective communications plan without having a centralized resource like our own website.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Thank you Deborah. I agree with what you just said. I am sure others are as well.

We have another person here. Hold it for one second.

Thank you. Ingrid, I apologize. The floor is yours.

>> INGRID: To the chair. No worries. Hi everybody. I wanted to say little really sort of comprehensive and aesthetically pleasing website would make a massive difference.

I could think of it as something that is sort of like a legacy that is going to continue to grow and get better, and there will be more information on. It is exciting. And I think it is really clutch that something -- If somebody has guests coming, is that acceptable?

I have not thought about that and to be able to research it, if company is coming or situations in their life change. Yeah, I think the website is a big priority. It does not really matter what we do is nobody knows about it or can find us. Because I think they need is there. I think people don't know. Website is a sound investment, ongoing is beautiful, even better. Knowing nothing about computers.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: I'm going to shift back again to a few more comments that the mayor had made. I'm going to ask if anyone else has anything briefly they want to add, that was at that meeting.

Mayor Ballantyne shared a story when she would take her dad through the city, and she would have to push them on his chair through the streets, because it wasn't another accessible, safe route oftentimes. And once someone helped him out, they offered him help out of kindness. And the term "kindness" struck me personally, when we were chatting that day.

We talked about the difference between the ADA or Americans with Disabilities Act law, is a law. It is government. It is the authority; it is the law that Adrienne ensures to do her work. We are not the ADA coordinator, we are not the law, we are the goodness a bunch of volunteers and resins and we do this without being paid. We do it for different reasons, here from different backgrounds and represent different types of disabilities and different groups.

I just want everyone to understand that I think that our logo is contained within a heart. We did incredible events in July. We are going to move forward with more events, and we are going to do that with goodness.

Okay?

It's very quiet here tonight.

>> I would like to point out one of the things we talked about.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Might have to speak out a little bit louder.

>> Think we all agree we need more visibility. More people need to know about us. And we also talked about ... We would like to have a closer communication with the city Council.

None of these things -- They were brought up at that particular meeting.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Thank you for sharing that. Sheila, would like to add anything that was it took away for you?

>> SHEILA: Yeah one of the things we discussed was to hope that the administration and the city departments would use us, the commission, as a resource as opposed to being a barrier to getting things done. We are here to assist. And as most people know, this commission is made up of people with varying disabilities, people that are very familiar with many disabilities. It would make a lot of sense to have a voice of the disability community through the commission at the table, for things that would affect their lives.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: I know we had suggested looking at consultant and looking at redoing the website. And after our discussion, it is very clear to me and I know to everyone else that this piece of the website will begin with the new group that will work on communication, and we will look at that website from that holistic point.

Any other comments on anything?

Ms. Harriotte.

>> HARRIOTTE: I'm really glad that we could spend time with the mayor. And I think one of the things -- in the overwhelmingly brought panel of responsibilities, that recently escape the attention of any and all city departments. And what we are is a possibility, if you take all of our different disabilities-- and there is a variety of us-- we are in the sense experts in what will work for us, in comparison to the City of Somerville. And connected with all of the important things the city is doing, creating, making happen. It's a ... it's definitely an important, we can contribute to the city, and the citizens with disabilities. And that of course covers a pretty broad spectrum of seniors, etc., etc. And cooperating and connecting with each other. Thank you.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: I'm going to move on. Adrienne ... you have the floor. Please take your full 10 minutes. If you need more, I will shuffle another area.

>> ADRIENNE: Thank you so much speaking about being the ADA coordinator, I realized when preparing my report this week, but some folks-- even some folks in this commission-- don't exactly know what I do. I sometimes show that every day is different sometimes. There are new adventures. I have to figure it out. It is true. I talked to other ADA coordinators, and the law itself is so vague; many pieces of federal legislation, it gets passed down to the states and the local level. Figure it out as best you can! With all this braille we put in here.

So yeah. What my job is, is to make sure that all of our stakeholders-- mostly including city staff and other folks who are doing work in our city and are operating businesses in our city, are doing the very best to make sure that a city there is over 120 years old is fully accessible by the standards of the ADA.

Now, as the chair pointed out, the ADA is very much basics. Very minimum.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: All I meant to say it was the law.

>> ADRIENNE: I think we would agree. What I am saying is a lot of advocate would say that the ADA does not move far enough. Bare minimum.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Sure. For a while as it sits is a bare minimum. And we may choose to go about that, if we choose to do so.

>> ADRIENNE: I have been ADA coordinator for over three years at this point and Brian and I have had conversation about working with put our resource to go above and beyond in certain areas?

I will say that my colleagues and I wish we could go above and beyond in every single area in the city. But unfortunately we cannot.

And so I not only exist as a staff liaison do this commission, but I exist for 80,000+ residents and other folks who will engage with our city to handle grievances, resources and things that people may need. I often have to refer to our state-level resources.

And so for instance, if you need a handicap placard, the city cannot provide that for you. That is a state process you have to navigate. Which is sometimes very rigorous, and difficult depending. They don't unfortunately make it easy or seamless to get those.

But for our guests here, the Department of racial and social justice, which as far as I understand is one of four racial and social justice usable department in the country, created in March 2021 by the former mayor.

I am available if you want to talk Megan, and Latoya and the staff taking notes for this evening.

And with that said, we are very busy over the next couple weeks with a lot of events that we always love to share with commissions such as yourselves.

Next Monday, we are hosting an event in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. at East Somerville community school which is at 50 Cross Street. It is going to be a panel ... talking about the advocacy around the themes from a documentary called Good Trouble, which chronicled John Lewis's very, very admirable throughout her career in the civil rights movement.

The city has purchased rights through February 6 for anybody to view their talking documentary online. I will send that link out tomorrow. It is not required to view the documentary before attending the event, but the things in that documentary will be discussed next Monday from 11 AM to 1:30 PM if you would like to attend.

Along with that we will be collecting donations for a community toiletries, etc., if you're so inclined.

Any questions about that?

I will put it in the email.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: I saw it in the newsletter. I was excited.

>> ADRIENNE: Also coming up on the 25th, the following Saturday is Somerville's second annual Lunar Year celebration which will be at Somerville high school. So this is just going to be a celebration of local Chinese, East Asian and Southeast Asian, and the traditions around that holiday, and saluted traditional snacks. And you can receive the luck from a lion dance that will be taking place -- I believe it is on Saturday; I want to say 2 PM. I will send an email tomorrow. Not sure.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Fair enough.

>> ADRIENNE: Finally going back, on February 4, a Tuesday evening, there is going to be a report out from the members of the public safety, civilian oversight task force and the anti-violent working group discussing the findings they have been working on for the better part of a year, and the next step in that process.

I believe that event starts at 6 PM that evening and go until 8 PM or 8:30 PM. And again I will put it in the email.

The public information on these findings, you can submit questions for those groups online starting January 28. And that will be part of the Q&A session they are doing at that report.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: A question. When will those reports be ready?

Will there be availability to have it in a ... a Word file, so members can have it read aloud to them, or it can be embossed.

>> ADRIENNE: I don't know I think it won't be available until the day of. It is a public meeting where they are reporting . We can certainly get those documents retroactively.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: And have they ready?

We can find out-- if either of our members that would need them embossed, or a word version, please reach out so that we can be proactive. I am sure that will be a very large amount of braille.

>> ADRIENNE: Yeah. I think Nicole, you had a question?

>> Yes. Sorry to veer off topic just a tiny bit. A question for you Adrienne. Was curious. I sent you an email about this probably an hour ago.

Can you just explain a little bit about what the process is for the open seat on the commission?

How does that work?

>> ADRIENNE: Nicole, I will be happy to answer your email. Is not an agenda item This evening. I don't want to veer off topic, when a seat is open in a commission is public be announced on a website, and I believe it is open for 6-8 weeks and once applications are received, then each board or commission has an interview applicant process. And those names have to go to the mayor and city Council.

>> NICOLE: Gotcha. I don't know how that works. Just wanted to ask.

>> HARRIOTTE: If it is not too much, I will say that the steps are easily known to the public. May I continue?

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: I have to table that because we are very far behind.

Do you have a report on the (indiscernible)?

I have not received any updates from what you shared.

>> ADRIENNE: Priority meeting I was able to share with Holly so she could finagle the agenda. PSEF (phonetic) is ready for the next set of swings but needs this body to approve a larger amount of money so they can begin the process with the vendor. The top of that budget would be \$20,000 that includes 10 swings. With that said, that does include installation. The reason it includes installation -- it will be bid out for installation is that DPW is a report right now what they don't know they can guarantee to help install. In order to have it be timely once it arrives, if we could pay a vendor to do it quicker, that is what we want to do. That is why it is being included. But the next step is for PCEF to be able to move forward is for the commission to finally say yay to 20k.

>> I was going to ask that question. How much...

>> ADRIENNE: \$20,000.

>> HARRIOTTE: Know the (indiscernible).

>> ADRIENNE: Public space and urban street, eventually known as (indiscernible).

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Last time we shared at this meeting, they were taking over the project, and we advocated, we appreciated their assistance, and the role defined for us was to identify where they could be safe and involved, and going on the methodology of a park has two baby bucket swings. We plays well with the swing that is adaptable for a baby all the way up to 150 pounds adult.

And we went through-- they went through that auditing process, which was fantastic. Validated that all the locations we had on our list were suitable. And sent out a survey and got feedback.

I am still not clear on what those swings were. But certainly can vote tonight to fund that project. But as part of our finance policy and with that being that the invoice still has to come to me to sign and you to review before it gets paid.

So if they can send that to me ahead of time, that would be great if they have that available. So it doesn't get sent back.

>> So they would send what we would call an "order," because the order feeds the requisition into the process. And when things are finalized, an invoice comes with the amount. Because what can happen between requisition and invoice is say AVW has the capacity to install, the chances that invoice will be \$6000 less.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE:
Sure.

>> So the 2010 solution but if the AVW would do it, it will be less.

>> Probably 14,000.

>> We could take a new vote.

>> I would recommend for record-keeping to take a new vote.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: To any of the voting members have any questions about the swings at this moment and what we will be doing?

Ms. Sheila?

>> SHEILA: Do we know what they decided to purchase?

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: We do not.

>> They were trying to get that information tonight. The very much want to get a finance information because they can't move forward until we vote, they do not want to wait another month and I don't think we want to do another special meeting.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: If there are no questions, I am going to move that we vote to allocate \$20,000 and replace what we may have previously voted on the swing project. But the condition that we will see the quote, and the information on what those swings are.

>> One of the things that is being suggested is to vote up to \$20,000, so it doesn't have to be changed.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Understood. We are voting to fund up to \$20,000 for the first 10 swings, with installation if necessary. And do I have a second?

>> HARRIOTTE: Yes.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Harriotte is my second. All of those in favor?

Aye?

I am going to have to roll call.

Where is my list so I don't miss anyone.

>> I'm going to start online to make it easier.

Michael.

>> MICHAEL: Yes.

>> Ingrid?

>> INGRID: --

>> She is nodding yes.

>> INGRID: Yes, sorry!

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: We can come back to him.

>> Deborah?

>> DEBORAH: Yes.

>> Murshid?

>> MURSHID: Yes.

>> Sheila?

>> SHEILA: Yes.

>> Pauline?

>> Yes.

>> Harriotte?

>> HARRIOTTE: Yes.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: So that passes. We will allocate up to \$20,000 and roll out those document. How exciting!

And we will talk about the next 10 swings after that.

Is there anyone here from the mental health team that would like to share any updates?

Have you met Valerie?

The holidays are a tough time. I don't want to point fingers at anyone. It is perfectly fine.

>> HARRIOTTE: I have had some conversations. That nothing particularly interesting has been found or (indiscernible) on, as far as project. And Laurie continues to research next step programs in the city and how they can get creative. That is as much as I know.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Thank you.

Education team?

Deborah, Ingrid?

>> DEBORAH: Sorry I was having trouble with my mute. I do not have an update for this month.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Parking?

We all know that the parking minimums passed. The were very moved by our letter exposing our concern, removing all parking norms in the building that would have 5% of housing required to be fully ADA-wheelchair accessible, and having those units without any parking. It did pass.

However, there is more work that can be done. There are more discussions that I hope we will be having. And I think the parking minimums bleed across legislative matters, and the need for us to look at things that come through from all different areas within our community that are being discussed.

And Sheila, do you have another piece?

>> SHEILA: I think we all know the process we went through about a month and a half ago, in the public hearing, this body voted to send a letter about the minimum parking, it is all in construction, residential/ commercial throughout the city.

We did present a letter. Some of us on our own submitted other documentation and testimony on how it would affect their lives. And it did prompt a lot of discussion. In the end it did get voted out. They did extend the implementation deadline to February 1. Not sure why we never heard back to see what discussion would follow. But it has been approved.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: And then, one piece. Here we go. I was at City Hall last week, on Thursday.

And there's a furnace of some sort, a boiler that sits outside City Hall. It is sitting in front of the four handicap spots. Its fencing is actually in the parking spots. It shoots out water. Which is now frozen. And when it wasn't frozen, in areas not frozen to eyes, it is pooling in puddles. And so the signs are blocked. I was shocked as I stood outside and no one else noticed it but me. And I know that in the past, when there was construction being done there, we had spaces moved. But this is not construction. This is a large piece of equipment. It is really dangerous. And no one in this room is responsible or can fix that or created this problem. But I really wanted to share pictures of what this looks like.

I don't know what the easiest way to do that is. Are you logged into the meeting?

If I send them to you Adrienne in an email, can you share them?

>> ADRIENNE: I can. I understand you want to create a visual. And you described it greatly. I am thinking about time.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: I appreciate that. But I think it is important.

>> ADRIENNE: And I can certainly talk to ...

>> BRIAN: If you text them to me I can see if I can login on my phone.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: I put them up.

>> BRIAN: We should continue with the next item.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: I just sent them to Adrienne. Sorry. I will send them to you.

>> ADRIENNE: I can (indiscernible) with DPW.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: How many people walk by, and nobody noticed it?

>> ADRIENNE: It may have they noticed it but they (indiscernible).

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: And I know your office is not there. You would not have seen it. There was someone parked. Hopefully, they did not need annexes out to get a person in a wheelchair out or who had other needs. If we can show those afterwards it would be great.

>> I don't think we had ...

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Legislative matters. Sorry. We talked about the swings.

At the same meeting there was a presentation made, and it was talking about revising the ... Ordinances, and our city statutes using plain language. Which is something that we talked about, the importance of using plain language in everything we do, so that it is accessible, and that everything we are writing as a commission for persons with

disabilities. But also it is a huge undertaking for a municipality, and I want to stand up and clap and thank this person who did a fantastic presentation and is already working toward changing that it is not easy to take something that is written in almost premature language and turn it into plain language. So I thought that was something that we should all be aware of, that it is not something that we are talking about ... and looking for. But it is important to our collective (indiscernible).

And I think we should let them start there. And learning from that, we also should start looking at that, using plain language and again we will tie that back to what we do in our communication plan.

Sheila?

Can you give me a five-minute update?

>> SHEILA: I can do it very quickly tonight.

So the December financial report had investment income of \$794.70 and fines and fees of \$10,405 for a total of -- -- I took a look at since December is halfway through the fiscal year, I took six months, as opposed to the previous two fiscal years, the two full ones we have on record. We had a couple of months when the revenue was a little low. I was tracking it to see if we were on target.

For the first six months the total revenue of fines and fees plus investment income is just over \$65,000. Which if that continues with the next six months it is in line with the other Years, which is been about hundred 30,000.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: So the initial plan and discussion of keeping (indiscernible) in reserving what we allocated for the scholarships were in line with that?

>> SHEILA: Yes. Because the scholarship money will be so much -- Because we went above last year.

And of course the scholarship money will fall into the following fiscal year. The money, the revenue coming in is steady as last few years were. So we will budget about 227,000.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Does anyone have any questions?

Okay.

We are at the end line here. The discussion of the 2025 goals, and also projects. And ... I'm going to ask Michael if you wouldn't mind talking about what you shared with me of the events.

>> MICHAEL: Sure. I will update what I talked about last month. For the parent workshop, I met with Adrienne and Meredith. And I believe Stephen from the language-- thank you Adrienne, I saw your head nod yes -- to talk about how to make sure that

people, different languages, will be able to access the virtual workshop. And they have that all taking care of.

And our SJ has the Zoom well taking care of. I have a fellow in touch with, who you know is happy to do the workshop. We have to do all the vetting; we have to do whatever needs to be done governmental wise. But that one seems to be coming along very nicely.

The other one that we spoke about was the sixth grade workshop. And these are all centered around mental health. Which May is mental health month. So I'm hoping that they will all accumulate into May. And the other one that I am working on is, you know, the sixth grade project. I love the people who work for the school district. But people are very busy with the holiday season. So I have been unable to get in touch with them. Other than CPAC, it is again very interested in working with us, for both of these things.

The first one will be to the families of Somerville. Of course anyone can come. But we will be talking about, you know, as an adult if you have kids and mental health issues. If you have mental health issues as a parent; if your kids have mental health issues, what you can do.

And of course anything in this program will be so beneficial to any single person, or anybody or a couple or whatever.

So the other one ... I forgot your name. Our Commissioner chair.

Holly.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: You can give me a new name, it is okay.

>> MICHAEL: Holly is going to help support in reaching out to the superintendent, or whoever else we will reach out in the school district to see how to get this going.

I would also like to do another reading, this one more centered around mental health rather than ... Employment. Which Holly had mentioned that we just missed the employment month, unfortunately.

So if there is anybody in the commission who would like to be co-speaker with me, if you have a story about mental health that you would like to share, to open up the conversation, please let me know. Because I think having two people is always a good idea.

And then, you know what?

I also think that if it is possible to do something, you know, where we have-- and this is what I haven't worked on yet-- but it would produce something where people around the city who have resources to share can come to some kind of fair, and people can come and talk to them. It would all be centered around mental health.

The thing about mental health is that it actually covers everything, everybody, and everything. Because when you have a disability of any type, it can cause anxiety. And you do not have to have a diagnosis of mental health. So this is something that it is major for many people. Especially these days.

I think that's it. I think that's everything on my list that I can think of. But if anybody has any questions or any thoughts, please share. And we can go there.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: So Michael, thank you for giving us the month of May.

>> MICHAEL: Yeah.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: We already have the month of July. We are not going to go over the specifics for each of those things. We just want to build a calendar and sort of a straw man plan of what we are going to be doing, for what our goals are.

Is anyone else -- I think it is October, trying to confirm, what is disability employment awareness, is what I am looking for.

Here it is. National disability employment awareness month. In October. And ... to me, I think that training for people -- Housing, education, employment, those are things that we all deserve. And we all-- many of us need those things in a different way.

And I think train and education is one of the most important things we can give in our community. That is one reason we give scholarships to our high school students.

So I feel strongly that National disability employment awareness month is something we should recognize; it does not mean we need to have a parade; does not mean we have the giant event. It could be one event. Could be something we decide later. Looking for feedback on that suggestion. From anyone.

Yes Ms. Harriotte?

>> HARRIOTTE: I think it is a great idea. If people (indiscernible), there is so much to offer. My employment history is (indiscernible), illustrative. It shows some of the complexities; it keeps changing. Ideally our consciousness keeps changing. But still, it is a compass world. It intersects between culture and belief systems, and all that. I would love to participate in a panel or something like that.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: We always have the ability to provide access or location or on Zoom for something that someone else has hosting and has built out. We don't have to put on an event. I am not saying that for mental health awareness Mike. I know you have great things that you would like to do. But I am saying that we can seek resources already have something it would decide that this isn't something we can do on our own. That would be three months.

>> HARRIOTTE: (indiscernible).

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: October would be disability employment awareness month. May we be mental health awareness. July, disability pride. I would not recommend going overboard. But I would entertain if anyone has a suggestion. There are big events, like human rights day.

I feel the city probably already has or is planning something around that. And we might not need to do that. There are things on this list like Veterans Day. We know that there will be Veterans Day events.

Adrienne has left the room, or I would give her this link of other events. Deborah?

>> DEBORAH: I would be interesting in us doing something for rare disease day, February 28.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Rare disease day. I think that is a great idea.

It is the day, not a month. Correct?

>> DEBORAH: Yes it is actually February 29; it is celebrated on the 28.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: How rare is that. It is a leap year. Do we know what day it will be this year?

It is a Friday. It is a business day. Okay. I think that is great.

Any other suggestions?

Before we settle on these four?

Everyone is so quiet.

Murshid, what is new?

>> MURSHID: I think we can also work on the employment.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Thank you.

>> MURSHID: Because I'm seeing that employment... We need to create more awareness on various employers within Somerville, and people with disabilities. Because I think we saw a decrease. With some companies. We need to emphasize the rights of people with disabilities and those companies, maybe Home Depot and others, maybe employers, things like that.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: I agree. Okay.

>> MURSHID: In short, we need to recognize those companies and organizations that have created maybe walking environments for people with disabilities. Also to use it as a way to create awareness for more companies to do the same.

>> HARRIOTTE: Thank you.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Thank you very much.

Who also we have not heard from very much night?

Anyone else?

Pauline?

>> ADRIENNE: (indiscernible).

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Go ahead Michael. You are muted.

>> MICHAEL: I am sitting, screaming in my house. I wanted to add one more thing. I actually published my third book. I wrote a book-- I am writing a series on movie rules. And I wrote a book, a little life guide, on movie, superhero movie rules for people with PTSD. That is my first one. So I just wanted to put that out there. That throughout next year, I will be writing smaller guides for each of the different disabilities, relating them to different movie rules. I wanted to point that out. Thank you.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Great. Nicole you have your hand raised?

>> Yes I do, I had to run away from the call, but I heard something about rare disease day. I wanted to ask. Is that an event that is happening, that will be happening for the day?

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: We are talking about different months and different events we would like to recognize, not 100% sold on it.

Can you hear us?

>> Yes.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Excellent so yes, rare disease day, February 29 celebrated on the 28. That is a Friday. And that was recommended by Deborah. We think that it is a great day that we will plan something. We will put that in our plan moving forward.

>> Okay whoever brought that up thank you so much, from a very rare family. Thank you for that. Excited for that. Thank you.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: These are the pictures. You can see on the left of the fence curve actually is. And not quite a foot but 8-12 inches, it is in the parking spots. And all of that is ice and/or water.

And that goes the full length of that section, and all of that is accessible parking and access points.

That's it from a further review. There is one picture of where the signs are.

>> (off mic)

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: The signs are safely stored. They are nearby. Right there. In front of the original high school.

And in that red item, device ...

>> Heats the building.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: It is to be at a certain distance. It needs to be doing its job. The solution is to relocate those spots temporarily. I am sure that is a very big task.

>> Probably should (indiscernible).

>> ADRIENNE: Because we are above ratio in that lot, for ADA slots.

>> Other than the signage ... I think the fence reaching into it might be a problem. It may not technically be an ADA issue. We will see what DPW wants us to do.

>> ADRIENNE: We will not be able to relocate the full six.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: I think any progress for the winter, where it needs to sit there, and the liquid is turning into ice.

>> BRIAN: No matter if it is an accessible spot, or standard spot, needs to be dealt with; I don't need to be an engineer to say it.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: It was steam being let off. I don't think it was broken.

>> BRIAN: the ice needs to be resolved. The steam may not be resolvable, but that area should be treated on a regular basis and I'm sure that DPW has a way to ensure that.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Okay and what is it take to not need that piece there?

The furnace in the parking lot?

>> BRIAN: Reconstruction and renovation of the building which would house a permanent boiler for those folks.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Why did I hear something about when we built a high school, we took something down that had a connection to that?

>> BRIAN: So this is off topic. I can go into it, but it may not be the right thing for your diary. But you tell me. I can answer the questions.

The original high school in City Hall was powered by a boiler plant behind the old high school. And in the high school project, the plan was to in following the high school reconstruction reconstruct the 1895 building, with a permanent boiler for the City Hall. And City Hall would ever be fed off the new high school, that was the plan.

For a variety of reasons the 1895 project was put on hold. Which has lengthened the amount of time they needed to have a temporary boiler.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Thank you.

>> SHEILA: Is it an air-conditioned unit, in the summertime too?

>> No, that goes away. They do window units.

>> BRIAN: Yeah but it is not (indiscernible), only for emergencies.

>> ADRIENNE: It goes away (off mic)

>> SHEILA: And there is no timeframe on the building being renovated?

>> BRIAN: Not that I am aware of.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: But it is on the list. It is discussed by everyone and staff. I know. We all want to see it done. That was my high school. That physical Building.

You had something else you wanted to talk about?

I said that because of the time, if you could wait and now we have time.

We have come to the end of our agenda.

>> HARRIOTTE: I would like to raise the possibility, I cannot remember now, our visitors had many questions for us.

>> This is Caitlin -- I don't have any questions at the moment. I think this has been really enlightening to hear how you all interact, and manage meetings, and push things forward. I cannot see (indiscernible), but I think that there may be an opportunity in my mind for rare disease day, because I do think that women are also disproportionately impacted by lack of medical research and things like that. This is the first time I've heard of this day. What I assume it means, there could be an opportunity. I will be happy to chat with them and come back to you all.

But I have really enjoyed my time here. Thank you.

>> So glad to see you here.

(off mic)

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Ingrid?

>> Muted.

>> INGRID: I am sorry, sorry. Ingrid, through the chair. Because we have the time I will waste it with a brainstorming idea. I really am concerned. And this ties into mental health and physical disability for sure.

I am really concerned about loneliness and trying to maybe make some sort of social outlet for people with disabilities. It started weird. It's not weird but it started like we should do a disability dating event. Just trying to think of different ways to maybe get people to hang out and watch movies. Oh, we are doing French movies in February. I don't know. Think of different themes, trying to figure out what I am going to put on the poster, how do we do that, were do we do that?

I don't know.

But I want to figure out because of myself with the physical disability, there is a bad snow date, you don't want to go out. Next thing you know you haven't seen anybody in like two days or something. I know that loneliness and disability, obviously that becomes a mental health thing. Community is important, for our residents to realize they are not the only disabled person in their environment or neighborhood. Sometimes it feels like you are.

Loneliness is an epidemic that crosses through all of this stuff. And yeah. I mean I worked in hospitality for a long time so I'm going to think about it. Like I said, because we have time to waste and yes, I am wasting it. I don't really have it flushed out.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: There is no such thing as wasted time.

>> INGRID: Strike that from the record. But it is still very vague. But I really want to figure out some kind of way for us to get together, and partner with the Council on aging, hanging out with those guys. During the movie event over the summer. And they have people from the house across the street, men in their 20s, who aged out of the special ed. A really awesome community. All the people and younger people who have gone through it. People with disabilities in our community to come together. I do not know how to do it.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: I see your hand Mike. Let me give one second to give Ingrid some feedback.

At one of the events during disability pride month, was after the movie was shown. But we have the list of events in a standard or table at Art Beat.

People were saying, oh, you showed the movie Coda. I would love to see that. It was on the Council of aging. I don't think anyone said you could not join. But they were so excited about that movie, but there was a confusion about, could they go?

And so I think that if you had another movie idea-- and we did talk about renting out the Somerville Theatre and hosting -- There was a movie by a local person with a disability who wrote a documentary about being a disabled person. It was a movie. And we talked about doing a showing for that.

We have to go back and see what that was. But if there was a powerful movie that we really felt we could fill an area, are very easily enough, I am sure that the Council on aging would love to come back and host another movie.

But I think we should look at that what that was. Does anyone recall what that was about?

>> MICHAEL: I am the one who brought it up. It was a movie that, to CPAC, is access to this movie that just came out. It has something to do with snow. The person who made the movie is also in the area.

So it is something that at least it can be a discussion. It can be something people can talk about. Yeah.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: That sounds great.

>> MICHAEL: I also wanted to add something that was said. This is something that Laura has been talking about for the past two months about the social club that closed down, and people with disabilities were going there. And so I think it is important that we join in with each other, with the other people who are also talking about the same exact things. Not letting them drop.

Because sometimes it feels to me like we say one thing at a meeting, and at the next meeting someone says the exact same thing. So I am just saying, you know, I think that it is an important thing to think about. I do.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Do you remember the name of the social club that she mentions?

>> MICHAEL: I do not.

>> HARRIOTTE: I think it was called Next Steps. It did close down. I don't know if it was before or after ... I wanted to also make sure that Meghan, do you have anything you would like to share with us?

>> No just listening, thank you.

>> MURSHID: I wanted to also thank Ingrid for the idea. And I myself, I was suggesting " I have been in other subcommittees, through you chairperson, socializing (indiscernible), I believe if Ingrid is willing to start something and she needs support, other people can do that. I offered to work with that and see how we can make something. Because I really like it myself.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: That is great.

>> MURSHID: Because I work for the Boston Center for Independent living, a number of memberships, and everybody has the (indiscernible) for it. Ingrid, if you're available, through the chairperson, if this could be a committee working on this, I am available. And we should start something.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: I think we are making another project. Calling it "social." I am not calling it "loneliness." I'm calling it "anti-loneliness." If you do not like social we can have other names. Ingrid?

>> INGRID: Think that is great. I do recognize-- I am realizing now as Mike said that, thank you for mentioning that, yeah it has been batted around a little bit. I think it is something important that we should flush out, and meet people where they are at, and what they can do and where they can go. I love WGBH very much. As a millennial without cable I love it. My kids grew up with that.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: To reiterate we have a communication group. And we now have a social group.

And these project groups will meet outside. We have Murshid and Ingrid wondering on the social group. I have ... Michael, Ingrid, Deborah, and myself in the communication group.

>> HARRIOTTE: Looks like Michael has dropped out.

>> FRANK: I am interested in the communications group.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: Excellent. Sorry we lost Mike. Let me do a quick count. We are still good on quorum. Thank you.

Any other final people who would like to join the social group with Murshid and Ingrid?

>> HARRIOTTE: I will like to. I don't know if I have much capacity.

>> DEBORAH: I would like to join as well.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: All right. And again, this is your own time. This is not a formal thing. But when we meet each month, give us an update of where you are at. The meetings cannot constitute quorums. And if you have any questions or, need some help just reach out to me or Harriotte.

Go ahead my dear.

>> HARRIOTTE: The hiring process. I only learned after I was appointed that the steps are really complicated. Because you submit a written application. And then if you're called for an interview usually with the chairperson, and maybe the ADA coordinator I

think, and then after that is done, then -- I have to get this right-- the next thing is the recommendations go to the mayor?

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: We have to go.

>> HARRIOTTE: The commission itself. Yes?

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: You know what she's talking about?

>> ADRIENNE: No.

>> HARRIOTTE: Fundamentally a go through steps, about four of them. Recommendations to the administration. And then the applicants are brought before the city Council. And reviewed the locations.

And then he goes back to the mayor's office. And final appointments are made. Can anyone add this information or correct it for me?

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: We did try to make it plain language with simple questions. I did notice Adrienne, there is a posting about open seats on commissions and boards and it has our body listed as 12 seats when we are 13. We have had an empty seat for a while. So there has been an opening, an open seat.

>> HARRIOTTE: And it is because there are so many steps. In one part of what it takes so long to get a new member. (indiscernible). I was interviewed in 22 April. And then I was finally appointed I believe along with Colleen in January I think-- I forget who the third member was. January or February 23.

And there were conflicts about each person's terms. And I have not gotten to that thicket yet. So something to think about. These positions. That's all.

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: And I will reach out to the clerk. About that missing seat.

Any other questions, comments?

Thank you to all of our staff here tonight. Thank you Brian for all you have done for the commission for those many years. I would have prepared something more ... I would have prepared more knowing that this was your last official meeting. Forgive me. But we really do appreciate all you have done, and we know you will still be connected to the work we are doing. We appreciate that.

>> Ditto. Ditto.

>> HARRIOTTE: I said ditto!

>> CHAIR SIMIONE: I'm going to move that we adjourn the meeting. It is 8:41 PM. That's a whole new thing. Okay.

It has never happened.

Do I have a second?

Got a second from Pauline.

All of those in favor?

Any opposition. There are no opposed. The ayes have it. We are adjourned.

Thank you everyone.

>> [End]