

# **DRAFT Minutes from Somerville Commission for Persons with Disabilities (SCPD) special meeting about HP funds 2/2/2024 at 9am**

## **Attendees**

### **Members Present**

Holly Simone, Chair  
Harriotte Ranvig, Vice chair  
Mike Shaps  
Deborah Haber  
Helen Corrigan  
Nick Altschuller  
Ingrid Schneider  
Sheila Tracy  
Murshid Buwembo  
Frank Lee (associate member)

### **Members Absent**

Brian Postlewaite, ex officio member, Director of Engineering, City of Somerville  
Pauline Downing

### **Staff Liaison**

Adrienne Pomeroy, ADA Coordinator, City of Somerville

## **Proceedings**

Held roll call. Read agenda.

### **Handicapped Parking fines funds Discussion**

Holly recounts that in the December 2023 monthly meeting, the commission allocated \$4,500 to fund a SCPD Night at the Celtics event at TD Garden on January 29, 2024, resulting in seats for 26 persons with disabilities and allies. Total cost: \$2,566. Attendees enjoyed the event. Attendees ranged from kids as young as age 5 to folks in their seventies and eighties and reflected a diverse population of Somervillens. Holly notes that some of our local Somerville business owners with disabilities also attended the event.

The TD Garden Guest Ambassadors—venue staff who assist attendees—were great in helping our guests with mobility needs lending us wheelchairs, audio devices, and swiftly through security. They were especially accommodating of the kids attending, and offered to relocate guests with seats that were more accessible.

The Ambassadors checked in with our guests throughout the evening, and escorted another guest into a cab, folded her wheelchair for her and safely lifted it to be stored in the cab's trunk.

Holly has written thank you letters to the Ambassadors, the ticket seller the city/SCPD worked with for the event, and other TD Garden staff.

Holly told us that, just a couple days ago, the city asked us to pause put future sports events on hold while our municipal finance and legal teams work out details. Some technical glitches arose during the Celtics event about how food/concessions would be paid for. The commission is working with the city's Legal and Finance departments to get clear guidelines for future events.

Holly says that originally, she had called this meeting to talk about an opportunity we have to attend this year's Disability Pride event at Fenway with the Red Sox. The Red Sox ticket seller who we worked with last year for Disability Pride Day reached out to Holly shortly after the Celtics event, offering 68 tickets to some really choice accessible seating for the 2024 ADA Disability Pride Day game. But we're going to hold off on voting to allocate a specific amount of our HP funds to the event until the city gets clearer guidance from Legal and Finance.

Holly would like to create a finance subcommittee within the commission to assist with the work involved planning for this and any other future events. Per our bylaws, the chair appoints the subcommittee, which must consist of less than a quorum of commissioners, and subcommittee meetings would be public meetings, though Holly is still working out the Open Meeting Law (OML) details with Clerk Wells.

Before our next monthly meeting, February 13, she would like us to come up with more ideas for future events the commission can host or sponsor.

Murshid says that for any future event, we should create a work plan. The plan would list tasks that need to be completed to achieve a goal, and dates by when each task is to be completed.

He expressed that the Red Sox and Celtics events were great, but for future events, we should also use these events as opportunities to reach out to venue staff and the sports teams themselves to educate about disability issues.

Holly says that having ideas of what projects and events we'd do is a first step. Also, we need to find a way to collaborate that's compatible with Open Meeting Law (OML). Would a shared Google Doc or Sheet suitable, for example? If not, what would work?

Holly also notes that sporting events like the Celtics have very short timelines. They need a deposit within 4 weeks to reserve seats.

Adrienne noted that from the city government's perspective, across all departments, everyone is excited that our commission has grown so quickly. The commission has not had all its seats full for years. There is strength in numbers.

Adrienne reaffirmed that this pause in commission-hosted sporting events is to make sure the commission is protected. There's a fiscal responsibility element. Municipal finance rules are very complex.

The Celtics event was more complicated than expected for city staffers, especially for RSJ Deputy Director Steven Flythe and herself.

Harriotte pointed out that part of the value of these events to promote inclusion and community among persons with disabilities, who are less likely to have opportunities to attend events like the Celtics and Red Sox games. She also noted that the more people with overt disabilities show up at a public event, the more the wider public (esp. non-disabled folks) will see that people with disabilities exist and are active in the community, challenging assumptions that people with disabilities are homebound or not interested in participating in public life.

Holly opened up the floor for discussion.

Sheila Tracy noted that municipal finance is complex, that she has decades of experience with it, and offered to help.

Holly accepted Sheila's offer.

Holly wants to work with Murshid to create a work plan for the Red Sox event.

Murshid suggested that he and she make a first draft to show to the members.

Holly pointed out that now that we have twelve members, two hours a month for our meetings may not be long enough to give everyone a voice. She recommends that we come to every future meeting fully prepared and ready for deliberations. Every month well in advance of the meeting, each of us should go to the calendar posting on the city's website and read all the posted meeting materials.

**Motion to use our funds towards this year's Red Sox ADA Disability Pride Day event, contingent on resolution of the finance and legal details**

Harriotte motions for a straw poll: Who is in favor of using our funds towards the Red Sox event for ADA Disability Pride Day, contingent on our ability work out the issues with finance and the city?

Ingrid seconded. Opened for discussion.

Mike Shaps finds it interesting that the City stopped us from moving forward with more sporting events right after the Celtics event. He feels we should make sure we didn't do anything wrong, that we should talk to the city to find out what they thought of the last event.

Adrienne shakes her head to agree with how we didn't do anything wrong.

Mike wonders if it's premature to vote if city doesn't like it.

Adrienne emphasizes that this pause is merely about compliance and law and complexities of spending municipal funds. This is a field where there are constant changes and updates. This is about making sure everything is lined up. The city wants us to be able to spend our HP funds. Adrienne explains to Mike that the intention of the Chair and Vice Chair is to get a sense of whether the members are supportive of the event, so that once the legal issues are clarified we can move quickly.

Adrienne affirms that if the motion doesn't include a specific amount of money, it is fine to vote.

She reminds the members that any of them can abstain instead of voting yes or no.

Mike says his disability creates anxiousness around these issues, but he is willing to go with the group consensus.

Holly thanks Mike for sharing about his reasoning.

Sheila thinks there's no harm in taking this kind of vote. Before the next meeting, let's straighten things out with finance. Says she's willing to help.

Holly says the city hopes we can have clear guidance before our next meeting on the 13th of February.

**Vote on motion to use our funds towards this year's Red Sox ADA Disability Pride Day event, contingent on resolution of the finance and legal details. Result:**

**PASSES with 8 yeases, 1 abstention**

Holly calls a roll call vote.

Sheila votes yes.

Murshid votes yes.

Helen votes yes.

Ingrid votes yes.

Nick votes yes.

Harriotte votes yes.

Mike abstains.

Deborah votes yes.

Holly votes yes.

Eight yeses, one abstention. Motion passes.

**Motion to adjourn**

Holly motions to end the meeting. Multiple seconds. Unanimous agreement.