

BOSTON DISABILITY COMMISSION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

May 21, 2025

5:30-7:30pm

Please watch video from meeting [here](#)

Meeting Called to Order

- 5:33pm

Introductions

Attended:

1. Paulette Durrett
2. Zary Amirhosseini
3. Richard Glovsky
4. Tara Southard
5. Olivia Richard
6. Paul Caron
7. Jerry Boyd
8. Elizabeth Dean-Clower

9. Wesley Ireland
10. Kristen McCosh
11. Juan Carlos Ramírez Tapia

Absent:

1. Carl Richardson
2. Charlie Kim
3. Dusya Lyubovskaya

Approval of Minutes

- Paulette Durrett motioned to approve the minutes, Paul Caron seconded the motion. Motion carries unanimously.

Presentation: Mayor's Office of Food Justice, Melissa Honeywood, Deputy Director

- **Office of Food Justice Mission**
 - Build a food system that is equitable, resilient, sustainable, and just
 - Expand equitable access to nutritious food with respect to affordability, physical accessibility, and cultural connectedness

- Support Boston's food economy
- Promote environmentally sustainable and resilient food production
- **Strategic Goals of OFJ and Grow Boston:** By 2025 (*with a focus towards longer term we as a city will:*)
 - Build equitable access and distribution systems for fresh, culturally relevant, and/or regionally grown food Citywide for food insecure communities
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 - Leverage City food procurement to increase purchases from regional producers and BIPOC producers by City departments and other large institutions in the City
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 - Increase food recovery from public and private institutions and strengthen pathways to connect food insecure residents with fresh, healthy recovered food.
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 - Increase food production in neighborhoods including in public spaces like parks, housing developments, schools, and community centers
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- **Resources for residents**
 - SNAP Restaurant Meals Program
 - 6 Boston restaurants participating
 - Community Servings
 - Medically tailored meals delivered
 - For more information visit boston.gov/food

Questions from the Board:

- Wesley Ireland asked why does Community Servings have a 12 month waitlist, why is the wait so long for food access?
 - The need is larger than the supply. This is a problem across Massachusetts.
- Jerry Boyd asked what are the six restaurants that allow EBT cards to be used?
 - Check the DTA website for that information.

- Jerry Boyd asked if there was a list of food pantries that have accessible entrances for people with disabilities.
 - There are lists but not sure how detailed the info is about disability accessibility. The City of Boston Food Resource Guide has info about how to contact each location.
- Jerry Boyd asked what the Advisory Board could do to support the work of the Office of Food Justice.
 - There is always a need to hear from diverse voices that are food insecure. There is a disability coordinator at DTA. It is important that DTA understand the needs of people with disabilities
- Andrea Patton asked how a restaurant joins the EBTS/prepared food network.
 - OFJ can collect that info from DTA. .
- SNAP Restaurant Meals Program Details for Clients: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/snap-rmp-client-faq>
- SNAP Restaurant Meals Program Details for Restaurants: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/snap-rmp-vendor-faq> , a new application process is pending.

Chair's Report: *Jerry Boyd*

- Thanked board members and other members from the community for attending the Disability Community Forum that took place on May 8, 2025. It was great to see participation in-person and online. The Mayor attended and took questions, spoke directly with residents and was available for photos. It was well attended and I know a valued event in the disability community.
- Boston Public Library Outreach Tour has upcoming dates, please visit the tour if you can.
- Fellow board member Charlie Kim is stepping down from the board and he will be sorely missed. He provided a valuable perspective as a BPS parent and I hope we hear from more BPS parents with disabilities.

Commissioner's Report: *Kristen McCosh*

- Abilities Expo received our letter and they are planning to come to Connecticut next year. In the past they visited Boston but the cost became too high. I will be working to learn how we can support them coming back to Boston in 2027.

City of Boston Updates

- Mayor Wu's [Neighborhood Coffee Hours](#)
 - Currently running through June!
- Open Streets
 - All Open Streets events take place from 10:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
 - Saturday, July 12 | Roxbury | Blue Hill Ave. from Warren Street to Quincy Street
 - Sunday, August 10 | Hyde Park | Hyde Park Ave. and River Street to Fairmount St. and Davison St.
 - Sunday, September 14 | Dorchester | Dorchester Ave. from Ashmont Street to Adams Street
 - Saturday, October 18 | Mattapan | Blue Hill Ave. from River Street to Babson Street
 - Sunday, November 2 | Jamaica Plain | Centre Street from Lamartine to South Street
- Outdoor Dining Season is Back!
 - Our staff works closely with multiple City Departments to ensure all outdoor dining is accessible - but we could use your help as our “eyes & ears” of the neighborhoods!
 - If you see any accessibility barriers, please report these to Boston 311, or email ADA@boston.gov

Department Updates

- Disability Community Forum - Recap
 - Thanks to our Advisory Board Members who attended in person and virtually!
 - Approximately 125 - 150 people attended, plus Mayor Wu and other City officials
 - We will be sending out a link to our Q & A document to all registered attendees soon
- ADA35 - Flag Raising, March, and Rally
 - Wednesday, July 23rd, from 12 noon to 2 pm - rain or shine!
 - Not our usual ADA Day Celebration - no resource fair, food, etc.
 - Collaborative in-person event of multiple disability agencies
 - Help us spread the word - the more people who come, the more power we have!
 - Schedule of Activities:
 - Flag raising at Boston City Hall Plaza
 - March along Tremont Street to Boston Common
 - Rally at the Embrace Memorial

- Disability Commission Department Work
 - Our mission is to make sure that residents and visitors with disabilities have access to everything Boston has to offer, such as employment, education, transportation, and civic activities
 - Our responsibility is to lead the City's collaborative efforts to ensure all City of Boston services, programs, policies, and infrastructure is accessible to people with disabilities
 - We do this by working with all City Departments to ensure everything they do is accessible!
- Systemic Work to Impact Accessibility
 - Bi-Weekly Meetings:
 - Equity & Inclusion, Boston Parks & Recreation Department, Press Team, Mayor's Office of Housing
 - Monthly Meetings:
 - Internal - Public Works, Transportation Department, Boston Public Library, Elections Department, Age Strong, Human Resources, Language & Communication Access,
 - External - MBTA SWA, MOD, MOPD (Municipal Offices for People with Disabilities), PCA Workforce Council
 - Quarterly Meetings:
 - Streets Cabinet, CCA

Advisory Board Updates and Opportunities

- Advisory Board Membership
 - We have some open seats on the Board we will be working to fill in the next few months
 - We appreciate all of your hard work and dedication, and look forward to you sharing updates on your areas of interest and expertise!
- [MACODA](#) Monthly Conference Call
 - We encourage our Advisory Board Members to join their peer disability commission members for the monthly meeting of the Massachusetts Commissions on Disabilities Alliance
 - The alliance is a group of COD members from across the state that meet monthly to share advice, mentorship, commiseration, and coordination. Many towns and cities face similar issues over time, so a primary goal of this group is to make sure no one has to "reinvent the wheel" figuring out solutions to problems others have already solved.

Questions from the Board

- Paulette Durrett asked when does the MACODA meet?
 - It is monthly, they meet on a Wednesday at 12noon on Zoom
- Wesley Ireland shared that the Disability Commission is helping people find employment in Boston. In Washington DC many Deaf people have lost their jobs as a result of what is happening at the federal level. In the Deaf Community's relocation effort it would be great if the City of Boston could attract Deaf professionals from DC to be involved with the City of Boston. I would like to see an effort similar to what has been done at the state level for this issue, you can see what they are doing at this link www.mass.gov/federal-workers.
 - Andrea Patton added that the City has signed on to a website for federal workers looking for new jobs. There is also a webinar on the Disability Commission YouTube that demystifies how to apply for City of Boston jobs.
 - Zary added that there is an employment now initiative at Mass Eye and Ear

Architectural Access Report: *Patricia Mendez*

- Happy to be here, there is nothing new to report this month.

Questions from the Board

- Olivia Ricahard asked if the office was aware that Seattle (and other cities) has had issues with hackers at Audio Pedestrian Signals.
 - That issue has not occurred in Boston.

Board Member Engagement Share Outs

- Zary shared that Mass Eye and Ear has an employment now initiative, it is an employment opportunity for people who are blind and/or have low vision. Training, assistive tech, and other resources are available as part of this program.
- Paul Caron May is mental health awareness month, as an advocate for mental health my line is always open. Please email me at paul.aron@boston.gov. Also the Van Gogh exhibit is still going on at the MFA, you can get a free pass at the Boston Public Library.
- Richard Glovsky mentioned he has a strong passion for children's mental health. He works with the Baker Center in Mission Hill and explained about its important work to provide youth mental health services. Last week the organization has an event at

the Park Plaza that he shared was successful and encouraged fellow board members to visit the Baker Center website and consider contacting them if you are interested.

- Juan Carlos shared info about an event on May 27th about adaptive sport.
- Juan Carlos shared that the play Disability on Trail by Jim Wice had a performance and it was enjoyable especially because of discussions the event inspired.
 - Jerry added that the event was great and it was great to see so many people come out for it. It was especially nice to see so many people in person. He shared that a production like that should be shared in schools and other public places.
- Wesley Ireland shared that I received the closed caption business [cards](#) that can service as reminder to restaurants to turn on their closed captions. I gave the card to a new restaurant and when I shared the card that immediacy turned on the captions, it was great for that to happen without issue
- Paulette Durrett asked if there were business card that could be used if we see situations we want to link people to resources, for example in the winter snow gets put in HP spots often and it would help to have a card or sticker to remind them of the rules that need to be followed to ensure disability accessibility?
 - There are generic “Disability Commission” cards board members can use.
- Paulette shared she attended the Older American event at the statehouse and the group representing PCA felt very strongly about future budget cuts to the PCA program.

Old Business

Boston Center for Independent Living Mayoral Candidate Survey

- Wes reported that he sent an email to Bill Henning but I have not heard back from BCIL. I have been thinking about priorities for the survey and that we can shift the questions from the 2021 survey. Does anyone have thoughts about that.
 - Andrea Patton added that as special employees that board may have restrictions, and that more guidance about what the survey can (and can not) include if the Advisory Board is producing it.
 - Wes asked how can the disability community get disability questions from the candidates
 - Andrea Patton reported that she will consult the City legal counsel.
 - Richard Glovsky we need to tread lightly on this, especially since the Mayor appointed us, even if we get past the legal issue.
 - Jerry shared that this topic will be discussed under the Old Business Item for next months meeting

New Business

Court Captioning Bill

- This is a bill in the State House right now. The bill would increase the established payment rate for stenographers.
 - Andrea Patton has been in touch with the stenographer community and they are not opposing a pay increase, but the bill does not include the word steno which could open the door for AI and other substitutes for a human stenographer.
 - Jerry asked that the information about this bill be sent to the board so members can look into and decide if they want to take a position. We will add this to the old business agenda time for next month.
 - Wesley Ireland Interested in seeing that email....I have always found AI and speech recognition tools to be positive but would be interested in seeing other views against it

Public Input

- None

Adjournment

- Zary Amirhosseini made a motion to adjourn, Paulette seconded the motion. Motion carries unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 7:15pm