

BOSTON DISABILITY COMMISSION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

May 17, 2023

5:30-7:30p.m.

Please watch video from meeting [here](#)

AGENDA

Meeting Called to Order

- 5:36pm

Introductions

Attended

- Jerry Boyd
- Elizabeth Dean-Clower
- Paulette Durrett
- Richard Glovsky
- Wesley Ireland
- Charlie Kim
- Dusya Lyubovskaya
- Juan Carlos Ramirez-Tapia
- Olivia Richard

Absent

- Zary Amirhosseini
- Paul Caron
- Alice Fisher
- Carl Richardson

Approval of Minutes

- Member Jerry Boyd made a motion to approve the minutes. Motion was seconded by Charlie Kim. Motion carried unanimously.

Chair's Report: *Wesley Ireland*

- The annual Disability Community Forum was a big success! Mayor Wu attended and shared remarks. Many issues were raised by attendees including challenges with MBTA infrastructure, housing, and more. Thanks to everyone who attended, and I want to remind you all to please report accessibility issues to 311.
- I want to make you all aware of the new Ahoi app. This is an app for people with disabilities to use when trying to find accessible businesses. There was a story about this new app in the Boston Globe recently. This app produces an accessibility score and is currently active in Boston. Check them out!
- Deaf/HoH Day at the State House May 19th. This is an opportunity for the community to meet their state legislators, I hope you all can attend.
- There will be a Deaf and HoH event at Fenway Park this summer, in addition to the Disability Pride Night you will hear about later in this meeting.

Architectural Access Report: *Patricia Mendez*

- The Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAB or AAB) is a state level regulatory board, I serve on the AAB as the Vice Chair
- AAB publishes accessibility regulations (521 CMR), which are part of the State Building Code. These are enforced by Boston Inspectional Services Dept. (ISD).
- AAB investigates accessibility complaints from the public. Our office sends access issues to the AAB's Compliance Officer and shares complaint forms with members of the public

- AAB refers projects that are seeking a variance (in Boston) to our office for input & technical assistance. They also seek input on variance applications from disability advocates and the public.
- AAB decides on variance applications at biweekly public meetings (virtual), or calls for a public hearing if more information is needed.
- The Mayor's Commission for Persons with Disabilities office provides technical assistance to building projects, events and initiatives that are under the jurisdiction of the AAB, such as Outdoor Dining, public events, and temporary pedestrian routes (during construction)
- AAB Bills - H.2291/S.1553: Building a More Accessible Massachusetts and Expanding the Availability of Adaptable Housing for People With Disabilities and Seniors. This bill will ensure more accessible housing units and workplaces are available in the state by bringing such buildings under the purview of the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (AAB) when newly built or when major renovations take place. To learn more please Contact: Charlie Carr, charlescarr@dpcma.org or 978-361-6682.
 - Potential Advisory Board Actions
 - Make a motion to update the support letter for H.2291/S.1553 from last year with the same language
 - Make a motion to prepare individual testimony for a future hearing on H.2291/S.1553 (date & time TBD)
 - Make a motion to monitor the bills and add to future agendas when hearing date becomes available
 - Make a motion to contact the Disability Policy Consortium to ask them to present about H.2291/S.1553 at a future meeting
- Proposed Update to 521 CMR or MAAB regulations - because the latest update to the architectural access code (521 CMR) that the MAAB enforces, a multi-agency Subcommittee convened between 2008-2018 and collaborated to rewrite to better meet the objectives prescribed in M.G.L. c. 22 § 13A
- In 2022 The Sub-committee was reconvened to meet monthly to continue the work of the rewrite and further it is in alignment with the format of the ADA 2010 Guidelines. Staff continues to serve in the subcommittee. Public monthly meetings are virtual

Questions:

- Member Charlie Kim asked for clarity around how the AAB and City's Disabilities Commission address housing. During the Disability Community Forum there were questions on housing and housing equity. I am curious where the line is drawn for housing issues that fall under the AAB versus those that fall under the Fair Housing and Equity Office?
 - Answer: Housing is a complex issue, there are building codes to be considered, there is also the issue of people being able to pay for housing, and there is also discrimination that happens between landlords and tenants. The AAB covers strictly the building code, it does not cover civil rights or other items. The Office of Housing Stability works with individuals in need of housing, and the Office of Fair Housing and Equity investigates housing discrimination. To ensure there is enough accessible housing for people with disabilities we need the AAB to update the building code.
- Member Elizabeth Dean-Clower commented that she thought employee only areas were not required to be accessible. It is a problem because many informal interactions take place in those areas that employees with disabilities should be able to access. Is the problem the bill we are considering going to address? Is there anything we can do to achieve the goal of passing this bill?
 - Yes, this bill would include requiring employee only spaces to be accessible to people with disabilities. This bill has been around for 20 years, we have had a lot of great testimony, encourage you all to testify on this bill when the time comes
- Chair Wesley Ireland asked when was the last time our board wrote a letter about these bills?
 - Answer February 2022
- Member Charlie Kim asked can we see a copy of letters written in the past about this bill? Would pushing this until next month cause any delays
 - Answer - yes we can send those letters, and because there is not a hearing date yet it will not delay anything.

Presentation – Fenway Park Programmatic Access: *Sarah Coffin, Red Sox Alumni Relations Manager & Team Curator*

- Fenway Park has 6 Employee Resource Groups with 250 Active Members
 - The ERG SAND (Sensory, Ambulatory, and Neuro Diversity) Network includes many people with disabilities.
- Everyone is invited to join the Fenway Park's Disability Pride Night 2023, July 26 2023 at 7:10 PM vs Atlanta Braves. Community partnerships include Adaptive Sports New England, BEEP Baseball/ Boston Renegades, Challenger League, and Special Olympics. You can buy tickets at this [link](#)
- You are also invited to Fenway Park's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Night on June 3rd at 6:10pm, and Blind Low Vision Night on June 4th at
- Assistive Listening Devices are available at Fan Services Booths
- Closed Captioning is available for all home games via the MLB app for the entire duration of the game. Pregame activities include closed captions on the lower left and lower right field LED screens.
- The SAND ERG Group at Fenway Park is open to learning from you please contact them at SANDNetwork@redsox.com

Questions

- Member Richard Glovsky asked about the planned activities for Blind and Low Vision night? Are there specific accommodations made to the ballpark for that night? Can you tell us more about how that night will work?
 - We have guides available to guests on any game night, but for the Blind and Low Vision night we have partnered with the Carroll Center and the Perkins School to have additional sighted guides available. The Deaf/HoH and Blind/low vision game nights have a donation component so a portion of the proceeds from those game nights go back to the community.
- Member Jerry Boyd asked what was being used as a measurement of success for Fenway theme game nights? I am also curious about services available to blind low vision patrons and how guests of Fenway Park can access those?
 - Ticket sales and participation rates are a major factor in how we measure success. We highly value the relationships and celebrations that occur from these nights and use that to measure

success as well. We have specific seating areas for Blind & low vision patrons. We also have a mobility assistance team at every single game. Other than having additional sighted guides on Blind Low Vision night there are no accommodations available that night that are not there on other nights.

- Member Elizabeth Dean-Clower asked if theme night tickets were low priced or free for people who need financial assistance? Especially for people who need to bring a PCA, which adds an extra cost that can be too burdensome for some with those needing PCA's to be able to participate.
 - Yes, that is what we rely on our community partnerships on. For example the Carroll Center, Perkins School, and Special Olympics are just some of those community partners that help us identify people who need assistance affording tickets. Also the Red Sox Foundation is very wonderful to us and can help.
- Chair Wesley Ireland asked when will closed captioning be displayed on the jumbotron? I am aware of the app to use on my phone, but it would be great to have closed captions on the main screen instead of separate screens. It would be good to know what was happening on the field, such a strange play or a delay for any reason. It would be good to have captions to all the guests but especially people who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Also is Fenway Park aware that the City of Boston issued an ordinance that requires any public facing TV's to include closed captions?
 - Fenway park is aware of this issue. Some of the control is within the Red Sox organization's control, and some of the control is in the hands of the MLB. Not having captions on the Jumbotron is not ideal. We have been using ribbon banners to have more text communications. We appreciate this feedback, it is important we continue to hear it. We are looking into compliance around the ordinance.
 - Commissioner McCosh suggested more about compliance that be discussed with Fenway Park offline.
- Member Olivia Richard - My best friend and I both use mobility devices. We love to attend Red Sox games. We have noticed the accessible seating is located near beer concessions and it creates a crowding that is very

uncomfortable. Can you please use the Fenway Park's mobility assistance team to help from being crowded.

- Understand your concern and in those situations we rely heavily on our ushers and other staff. If you encounter this challenge please talk to a Fenway Park staff member to explain you are feeling crowded and need assistance.
- Member Paulette Durrant asked - what can proactively be done because she is concerned that the burden is falling upon people with disabilities to get safe and accessible seating at Fenway Park. Encourage the Red Sox organization to do something proactively about these concerns.
 - We work with the Disability Law Center to do training for all of our staff as a proactive effort. Sometimes pieces of the training get missed, but we will talk with our staff about how to improve these efforts. We will be sure to bring back the feedback we learned tonight to our staff.
- Member Richard Glovsky asked if there was a number for security that people could call? Also there are TV's all over Fenway Park, I wonder if it would be easier to add closed captions to those TV's? Finally, is there a separate number blind and disabled patrons can call to get tickets?
 - Yes there is a dedicated ticket line for people with disabilities. You can contact security during games by calling or texting. We can certainly look into turning on closed captions on the smaller TV's throughout the ballpark.
- Commissioner Kristen McCosh asked, I know there are many affinity group events associated with Fenway Park. A group I am involved with is having a night but I did not see it on your list, was that a complete list? Also how do people go about applying to have an event for their affinity group?
 - The list of events we shared today were only cultural and identity nights. We have a full list of nights on our website, the best way to find them is to google Red Sox theme nights.
- Mary Coopers, a member of the public, commented that she is a spinal cord injury survivor and works for the local chapter of United Spinal. September 10th there will be a Spinal Cord Injury Awareness Night, we are hoping as

many members can join the evening. We have come across a challenge when trying to book tickets for this event, when trying to contact the box office we have run into a problem for booking multiple wheelchair seats together. Often there is a companion seat fixed in the wheelchair section which limits our members being able to book seats to sit next to each other all in wheelchairs. Can we get the fixed seating out of the wheelchair seating? I would love to go to a game and sit next to my friend in a wheelchair.

- Yes we are aware of this issue and are working on it.
- Rashid Kalule, a member of the public, shared that he is from Uganda and is working on disability inclusion there with an organization. Thank you for this meeting. I want to ask, because all disabilities are different, how are the ushers prepared to be the frontline responders to people with disabilities during at home games?
 - The Fenway Park mobility team works very closely with our ushers. Everyone on staff is connected by video and radios, if you encounter a staff member who can not provide assistance please ask them to contact someone else to help. The mobility team is stationed at Station D, and I encourage you to go there if you need assistance.

Commissioner's Report: *Kristen McCosh*

City of Boston Updates

- Mayor Wu Neighborhood Coffee Hours - more than a dozen dates left
- 2023 Disability Commission Events
 - May 11th
 - Annual Disability Community Forum was held last week - thanks to those who attended!
 - Mayor Wu, appointed officials, City of Boston staff, and staff from the MBTA attended
 - There were about 35 community members who attend in-person, and 100+ on Zoom
 - The video recording of the Forum can be found through this [link](#)

- The Disability Commission Annual Report for 2022 can be found through this [link](#)
 - We received dozens of questions we didn't get to answer - we're putting them into a google doc that will be posted in the next few weeks - stay tuned
- July 18th
 - 13th Annual ADA Day Celebration
 - 12 noon - 2 pm, on Boston City Hall Plaza
 - Information tables for disability organizations in Boston
 - Launching our "Boston Brakes" public education campaign
 - Recognizing an outstanding partner in accessibility & inclusion
 - Speaking program, food, music, t-shirts, socializing, & fun!
- Coalition of Municipal Offices for People with Disabilities (CMOPD)
 - This national coalition of more than a dozen cities meets monthly to talk about emerging issues, problem-solve, share best practices, and make policy recommendations on accessibility and inclusion to federal agencies
 - Last year, we met with the US Department of Labor, including staff from Secretary Walsh's office, to give our recommendations on increasing employment opportunities for people with disabilities
 - We also met with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) to discuss barriers to employment caused by the limits on income and assets in order to stay on Medicaid. We recommended using the Massachusetts CommonHealth program as a national model - it has no income or asset limits
 - Next month, we are heading to Washington DC to meet with Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg to discuss our priorities for accessible transportation

Questions

- Member Jerry Boyd commented that he attended the Disability Community Forum and thought the number of Advisory Board members who attended

in-person was very good. He shared that he thought the number of questions answered live could have been more, but was happy that the questions were collected and will be answered in an forthcoming document. I want to ask how the Advisory Board can support your visit with Secretary Buttigieg?

- Thank you for that question. Many other cities in the national coalition of Mayors' Offices on Disability have Advisory Board's similar to what we have in Boston. I will be meeting with that coalition again soon and will raise your question Jerry, thank you.
- Member Elizabeth Dean-Clower asked- people being able to fly while sitting in their wheelchairs, is that something years away?
 - Yes this effort has been pushed for a long time and there have been some recent efforts to propel it forward. I can send some links to the board about this. The issue is complex, there was a public comment period about it some time ago.
- Member Charlie Kim commented that it was very nice to meet members of the Commission in person, rather than only on Zoom, during last week's Disability Community Forum.

Announcements

- Chair Wesley Ireland asked if it would be to cancel the August Advisory Board meeting?
 - There were no objections and it was decided to cancel the August 2023 meeting.

Old Business

Healthcare discrimination story collection

- Member Jerry Boyd asked BCIL Executive Director Bill Henning about presenting at a future Advisory Board meeting. He was very enthusiastic about joining a future meeting and would like to bring staff with him too. Bill

Henning will connect with Commission staff to schedule the meeting/board presentation.

BPS Transportation follow-up

- Commissioner McCosh shared that her office is working on getting data for BPS transportation. That data is not available this month, but I hope to have it for next month.
- Member Charlie Kim shared that a task force is being formed on the issue. He will find out if the minutes from that task force are public.
- Member Olivia Richard commented that they want to learn the absentee rate for BPS students with disabilities that has resulted from lack of transportation.

New Business

- none

Public Input

- Kalule Rashid shared that he is from Uganda and came to the United States to work on disability policy and issues. He has noticed lots of collaboration in the work of the Boston Disabilities Commission, I am curious how you are engaging parents of children with disabilities?
 - KMC since we are out of time and you have many questions, so I can follow up with you when we have more time.

Adjournment

- Member Olivia Ricahrd made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Member Jerry Boyd seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned 7:38pm