

DISABILITY COMMISSION
ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

August 24, 2022

5:30-7:30pm

Please watch video from meeting [here](#)

Attended:

- Paul Caron
- Olivia Richard
- Juan Carlos Ramírez Tapia
- Carl Richardson
- Wesley Ireland
- Jerry Boyd

Absent:

- Yardley Sanchez
- Zary Amirhosseini
- Elizabeth Dean-Clower
- Alice Fisher
- Duysa Lyubovskaya

MEETING AGENDA

Meeting Called to Order

- 5:38pm

Approval of July Minutes

- no quorum, moved to next month's meeting

Presentation: Gillian Quinn PsyD, Aspire Health Alliance

- Described the population of people with mental health concerns to include:
 - significant number of people who also experience homelessness, and/or substance abuse disorder
 - COVID panemic (at all stages) increased mental health demand significantly
 - Adults with disabilities report more mental health distress than people without disabilities
 - People with disabilities may be at higher risk for depression
 - Increased demand for mental health services caused some supply issues.
 - Good that stigma is being dismantled

- Good that telehealth made reaching out for mental health services easier
- Funding for mental health services is a major barrier to access care
- Masshealth members have more barriers than others because less therapists accept Masshealth
- encouraged the audience to persevere if they want to access services and get on waitlists if necessary
- offered to share websites/companies to help find mental health services

Questions from the Board

- Member Ramirez-Tapia asked; How do non-English speakers access this service?
- Answer: Insurance will cover language translations for non-English speakers
- Paul:
- Answer - after COVID social anxiety, and anxiety from non-uniform COVID rules

Presentation: Corinne White, Age Strong Commission

- Overview of older adult population in Boston:
 - In 2010, there were over 88,000 residents age 60+
 - In 2018 we had 117,000 residents 60+
 - By 2030, this number is expected to approach 130,000
 - 117,000 residents of Boston are aged 60 and over, 16.7% of Boston's total population
 - 191,299 Massachusetts residents are living with a cognitive disability, 4.4% of the state's population
 - Approximately 26,700 older adults aged 65+ live with a disability in the city, 36% of persons living with disability in Boston
- Age Strong programs and services for older adults
 - Access to Information and Benefits
 - Outreach and Engagement
 - Transportation
 - Volunteer Opportunities
 - Housing
 - Alztimers and caregivers support
- Age strong provides dementia friendly trainings to City employees including BPD, BFD & Boston EMS
- Dementia 101
 - Dementia is an umbrella term that includes many diagnoses; it is not a normal part of aging
 - 1 in 9 adults aged 65+, as well as a smaller number of people younger than 65, develop dementia
 - More than half of people with dementia have not been diagnosed, and there

is no easy way to tell if a person has dementia

- Alzheimer's is the 6th largest cause of death in America and there is no cure
 - 6.5 million Americans have Alzheimer's disease, and approximately 15,000 residents in Boston are living with the disease
 - Total estimated number of MA residents age 65+ with Alzheimer's dementia was 130,000 in 2020. That number is projected to increase by 15.4% to 150,000 in 2025.
- How can you be more Age and Dementia Friendly?
 - Speak clearly and use a positive communicative tone
 - Be patient, supportive and allow plenty of time for a response
 - Use short, simple phrases and direct, close-ended questions
 - Avoid criticizing or correcting
 - Repeat the person's request or action back to them to make sure you both understand
 - Avoid using endearments and speaking in a patronizing tone
 - Sometimes it's easier not to use words - use visual cues
 - To learn more please contact, Dementia-Friendly Staff Assistant, Age Strong Commission corinne.white@boston.gov (w) 617-635-3745

Questions from the Board

- Member Richard asked: What resources are available for people who wander? Answer: there are many devices now to help with that but they are very expensive. Silver Alert is another option that is available with the Boston Police Department as well as safety net bracelets for people who wander and live within the City of Boston.

Chair's Report: Wesley Ireland

- ADA Day is on August 31st! Hope to see you there.
- Shared an update about airlines mishandling wheelchairs. Shared that the Disabilities Commission will reach out to MassPort for a review of how disabled people are treated at Logan and invite them to a future Advisory Board meeting
- Deaf Inc is turning 45 years old. Troy Kuster will be guest, he won an oscar for CODA
- Prince William and his wife Kate Middleton are coming to Boston In December. I mention this because they have been strong advocates for disability rights.

Questions from the Board

- Member Paul Caron asked: Can you share the contact information for Gillian

Quinn PsyD from Aspire Health Alliance in the chat?

Advisory Board Member Spotlight- Juan Carlos Ramírez Tapia

- Juan Carlos Rameriz Tapia moved to Boston from Peru in 2002. He loves living in this great city because he can be an independent disabled person. He uses a wheelchair because of a spinal cord injury he sustained as a child. He currently lives in the South End. He finds Boston to be very accessible for people with disabilities. His educational background includes completion of a bachelor's degree in biology and chemistry, as well as a master of science degree. He currently works at Massachusetts General Hospital. He is an active volunteer with Boston Self Help Center, and plays on the Boston Breakers Power Soccer team.

Commissioner's Report: Kristen McCosh

- ADA Day Celebration - Next Week!
 - Wednesday, August 31st, 2022, from 12 noon – 2 pm on City Hall Plaza - Patios Area
 - Recognizing the City of Boston Public Facilities Department for the Plaza renovations
 - Sasaki - Consultants who worked on City Hall Plaza ADA Renovations will also attend
- Civic Engagement Day
 - Happening soon
 - Open House on the 5th floor of Boston City Hall
 - Information tables, register to vote, meet City Councilor and ONS Liaison, hear from Mayor Wu
- Community Resource & Job Fairs
 - Hosted by the City of Boston Equity & Inclusion Cabinet
 - Saturday, September 17th, BCYF Hyde Park, 12 noon - 3 pm
 - Saturday, October 8th, BCYF Holland in Dorchester, 12 noon - 3 pm
- Important Dates & Announcements
 - Elections
 - Voter Registration Deadlines:
 - August 27th - primary election
 - October 29th - general election
 - Early Voting Start Dates:
 - August 27th - primary
 - October 27th - general election

- Election Dates:
 - Primary Election Date - September 6th
 - General Election Date - Tuesday, November 8, 2022
 - Don't forget there are Accessible Online Electronic Voting options available to people who are blind or have print disabilities
- Other Initiatives
 - Bicycle Awareness <> People with Disabilities Outreach Campaign
 - Campaign and tools to raise awareness of pedestrians with disabilities & cyclists
 - Thank you to those who have been involved! Focus groups, photo shoot, etc.
 - Launching the first piece of the campaign soon
 - Boston Public Schools - Recruitment Initiative
 - Lots of Job Openings - teachers, paraprofessionals, lunch monitors, other jobs!
 - Visit this link to [apply!](#)
 - Open Newbury Streets
 - Every Sunday through September 25th
 - Boston Disability Commission Advisory Board
 - Appointments will be announced soon!
 - Orange Line Closure
 - All Orange Line stations are closed through September 19th
 - Shuttle buses are connecting riders to stations
 - Accessibility for people with disabilities
 - All shuttle buses are accessible - mainly high buses with mechanical lifts
 - Accessible vans are also available to people with disabilities upon request
 - We are working closely with BTD, PWD, and the MBTA Office of System Wide Access
 - Report any issues to MBTA Customer Service [here](#)
 - More information is available in our Access Guide linked [here](#)
 - Passengers can ride the Commuter Rail at no cost using a Charlie Card or TAP
 - More information is available at boston.gov/orangeline
 - Commissioner McCosh invited Chris Hart from the MBTA to share more about the

Orange Line closure

- Chris Hart: We have already received anecdotal reports of issues with lifts not working, and bus drivers not being familiar with how to operate the lift, as well as encouraging wheelchairs users to not use the bus and instead use the van. We need to hear about these issues, so if any of you experience issues like these or know someone who is experiencing these issues we need to know the bus number, and the time and location of the incident. There is a sign on the bus that has the Orange Line shuttle bus number that will identify the driver and the vehicle. Please keep using the shuttle. You can tweet us using @MBTA with your experiences or you can email us SWA@MBTA.com or call us. I know most of you have our personal cell phones in addition to the SWA phone number. If you experience issues we want to know about them. I want to thank Commissioner McCosh and team for your work on the Green St. station stop issues, hopefully we get those resolved.

Questions from the Board

- Member Boyd thanked Commissioner McCosh for clarifying that the majority of shuttle buses are coach buses equipped with lifts in the back, not no low floor buses with ramps.
- Member Boyd asked whether the Advisory Board received an rescheduled invitation to tour the new City Hall Plaza? He suggested it be rescheduled for the upcoming ADA Day on 8/31/22
 - Commissioner McCosh said yes a tour will happen during ADA Day on the 31st
- Member Richard asked: I heard the trips booked on the RIDE that begin and end $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from an OL stop will be free during the closure. Is that true?
 - Answer: Yes that is true

Architectural Access Update: Patricia Mendez

- Invitation for Advanced Community Access Monitor (CAM) training was emailed to the board. The training will be Tuesday November 8, 2022 from 10am - 3pm. This training is for people who already have completed the first training, so those of you who took the training last year are qualified to take this CAM upcoming training.

Announcements

- None

Old Business

- During the last meeting advocacy for remote access to public government meetings was discussed and we made a plan to draft an open letter. The first step in that process was to gather more information from the Attorney General Healey's office. We sent an email to their office and from the response learned more about existing laws related to remote access to help us make a decision as an Advisory Board about our next step for advocacy on this topic.
 - The AG's office informed Member Carl Ricahrdson that the existing law on the subject of remote public meetings states that public meetings can have a remote, or virtual, participation option but are not required to have that option after March 2023.
 - Current remote public meeting rules are a result of actions made to address the COVID-19 pandemic, and in March 2023 those rules will expire. After the rule expires some entities (ex. City Council) will be allowed to include a remote, or virtual, participation option but it will not be required without legislative action.
 - All Massachusetts municipal and state disability commissions have a requirement for remote and in-person participation options, but it is limited to disability commission public meetings. To make that requirement include other forms of government, such as City Council or other commissions, legislative action needs to be taken.
 - State Representative Antonio Cabral has stated intent to introduce a bill on this subject when the next legislative cycle begins in January 2023
 - Chair Ireland mentioned that Attorney General Healey's office has been working on this issue even before the pandemic. He raised the point that learning more about the progress that the office made would be helpful.
 - Chair Ireland made a motion to vote to decide on the Advisory Board's statement on the topic of requiring a remote public meeting option at the next Advisory Board meeting in September 2022. In the meantime the board can continue to gather information on this topic

- Richardson suggested that the Advisory Board write a letter to Rep. Cabral after he has been assigned a committee in the new legislative session that states we support requiring a remote participation option for all government public meetings as a reasonable accommodation to people with disabilities.
 - Chair Ireland stated agreement because people with disabilities want to engage in government and civic opportunities beyond just disability commissions and those accommodations need to be available to them, so this is an important issue for us to take action. He recommended that we create a draft for a letter to the state legislature on the issues so once the new legislative cycle begins we are ready to go.
 - Member Ricahrdsn volunteered to reach out to legislators who have expressed interest on the issue.
 - Member Boyd mentioned that remote participation has given people with disabilities more opportunity to be civic engaged and it is important remote participation not be taken away.
- Member Boyd raised the old business item about the board's outdoor dining letter. Member Boyd asked, has it been sent to the Mayor and has there been a response from the Mayor's office?
 - Andrea Patton reported the letter was submitted to both the Mayor and the Outdoor Dining team. The Commission and the Board have not received a response from the Mayor. Andrea mentioned most of the staff working on outdoor dining had to shift their work to address issues related to the Orange Line shutdown, and it could be why they have not reached out to schedule time to chat yet, although we know they are interested in discussing further. Andrea will inform the Advisory Board once that conversation with the team has taken place.
 - Chair Ireland asked, is there a timeline we can use to expect when the City will respond to our letter?
 - Andrea shared she doesn't have a specific timeline but expects it will be after the work on the Orange

Line shutdown is complete

New Business

- None

Public Input

- None

Adjournment

- Member Richardson moved to adjourn the meeting, Member Richard seconded the motion, the motion carried unanimously.
- Adjourned 7:10pm

Next meeting: September 21, 2022

