

# COMMISSION ON PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

## Meeting minutes – April 2023

**Date:** Wednesday, April 12, 2023, 7pm

**Place:** City Hall, 301 King Street, Chet, and Sabra Avery Room 2000

**Members present:** Justin Beland, Michael Kamin, Alex Sprague, Jeff Pool, Rachel Dixon, Tom Valluzzi, Jen Wiser, Susan Picerno, Nathan Toews, Robert Ludke.

**Members excused:** Nawfal Kulam, Sabrina Reilly.

**Members absent:**

**City Staff:** Namood Khan, (OHR).

**Guests:** Mike Radt.

**Guest speakers:** None

The Meeting was called to order at 7:01 PM.

**Approval of the agenda:** Commissioner Sprague made the motion, seconded by Commissioner Beland, and approved unanimously by the Commission body.

**Approval of March minutes:** Commissioner Sprague made the motion, seconded by Commissioner Kamin, and approved unanimously by the Commission.

### Public Comment:

- Mike Radt: provided an update on the accessibility issue and complained that the City cannot be reliant on public complaints; they should be proactive and should be doing regular checkups of roads and sidewalks, and asked if the Commission can do something about it. Chair Pool commented that the city might have an audit of the streets, but that is something the Commission can take on as an activity, and the Commission might have a plan ready in the next meeting.
- Kurt Moser from the Four Mile Run Conservatory group talked about the public ADA-accessible kayak/canoe launch with wheelchair transfer platform and roller entry/exit, the first of its kind in the DC metro area. He informed the Commission that the project is moving forward, with the environmental review and permitting process. The project is expected to start in early 2024. He shared that they have \$375,000 in committed grant funding toward the project and are looking to raise \$100,000 more. He thanked the Commission for the time and requested the Commission to help spread the word.
- Doris Ray from the Endependence center informed the Commission about the role of the center. In addition, she provided following updates:
  - o Washington Council of Government has drafted a Fair Housing plan, which includes several jurisdictions including the City of Alexandria. This plan spells

out some statistics that describe the needs related to housing, to ensure advancement of fair housing and equity for all protected classes. The commentary on the draft has ended and the final draft will be out. She advised Commissioners to review the document and perhaps ask questions from a representative of ARHA to attend Commission meeting and answer any concerns Commission might have regarding how they will make housing affordable and accessible.

- This month, the Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority, which operates rail, bus is putting out the first version of revised bus routes. There will be several opportunities for viewing the tools and other information. Once they hear from the community, they will go back and review it. It is important for commissioners to go and attend one of their meetings. She offered that she would be happy to bring any feedback and ideas to the WMATA on behalf of the commission.

#### **Chair report:**

- Proclamation: Chair Pool shared that he and Commissioner Sprague were in attendance when the Proclamation on autism acceptance was presented by Vice Mayor Jackson, and the change in terminology from “awareness” to “acceptance” was very well received. Chair Pool reminded Commissioners to attend future events whenever Namooode sends out announcements/
- Chair Pool advised the Commission to let him know If anyone is aware of any disability accessibility issue with the libraries.

#### **Committee Report:**

- Legislative Committee: Commissioner Beland shared that the legislative session is coming to close. We were able to change the term handicap.
- ACPD Awards: Commissioner Wiser shared that the applications have been published, the committee will work on spreading the word.

#### **Liaison Report:**

- Commissioner Beland shared that his schedule does not allow participation in the Human Right Commission and would need to excuse himself from the Commission. Chair Pool requested him to notify the HRC Chair and Jean Kelleher that he will be stepping down. Chair Pool said that he is looking for additional volunteers to take Commissioner Beland’s position.
- Commissioner Sprague shared a brief update on the Housing Affordability committee.

**Member report:**

- Commissioner Sprague shared that They had the honor of having the proclamation read out. They shared that They are advocating against the use of Applied Behavior Analysis in schools and will continue to create awareness about the flaws of the Program. They shared that they are trying to remove the word “disorder” from the term autism spectrum disorder from the autism dictionary.
- Commissioner Valluzzi shared that Alexandria’s Metro Access is not user friendly and shared that he still has some concerns. Chair Pool is in touch with Dr. Lezzoni, the author of the piece on the accessibility of health care for people with disabilities, and shared that she is interested in speaking in one of our future meetings.
- Sue Picerno: ask would it be possible for that agenda to be sent out a few days prior – so that commissioners can add it to the agenda. Chair Pool commented that usually, the agenda is shared a few days prior to the meeting, however, the commissioners always have the option of adding to it on the day of the meeting.
- Commissioner Beland shared about the Soldier Ride this week in DC, which is a unique four-day bike ride for veterans and wounded service members. He encouraged the Commission to help spread the word about the event.

**Adjournment:** Commissioner Sprague made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Wisner, and approved unanimously by the Commission body. The meeting concluded at 8:25 PM.