



City of Portland
Portland Disability Advisory Committee
Minutes for May 3, 2017

Present: Michelle Ames (Disability Rights Maine), Lizette Belanger, Renee Berry Huffman, Jill Johanning (Alpha One), Karen Perry, Mandy Levine (City Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Specialist), Gina Tapp (City HR Director), Karen McPhee (Recreation), Cheryl Miner, Martin Margulis, and Jennifer Rogers (Interpreter).

Introductions were made and the sign-in sheet was circulated.

1. The minutes of the last meeting (April 5, 2017) were moved by Karen Perry and seconded by Martin Margulis. The group voted to accept the minutes.
2. Gina introduced Mandy (Amanda) Levine, the new Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Specialist, who will be assigned to work with the committee as part of her duties, providing training, and increasing the number of diverse employees in the city's workforce. Mandy is assigned to the Human Resources Department (HR) and working closely with Gina. Mandy will be chairing the committee meetings in the months ahead once she is settled in to her new position. Mandy shared some of her professional background, including previously practicing employment law; performing civil rights work at the Anti-Defamation League; and navigating many Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) matters in the HR field.

Gina informed the group that Mandy will be present at the committee to help with issues that are of concern to residents of Portland around disability, discuss proposals that will lead to policy on behalf of residents with disabilities, and provide general guidance to the

committee in the months ahead. Gina will continue to help Mandy with committee duties until she is ready to assume them.

b. Applications for the PDAC

Gina spoke to the group about the applications from prospective applicants who have applied for consideration for official committee membership. Everyone who has applied for these slots has met the criteria. There are eleven (11) slots that are to be filled. Those individuals who are not selected, or those who are currently attending meetings and who did not apply for the official committee slots, may still attend meetings and speak to the issues at meetings.

In response to the question of how much longer the process will take, Gina responded that will likely be at the conclusion of the budget process, which is taking place during the month of May. Once that process is completed, the applicants will be reviewed, interviews will be set up, and selections made.

Karen Perry: Stated that there are at least three storefronts (in the city) that she visits that did not know about the committee and its work, or the need for formal membership applicants.

There was subsequently a conversation about ways that we can better market the committee's work, beyond the City's website, such as social media outlets like Twitter and Facebook. We could issue a press release once the group is determined and share that the meetings are open to the public. The City website could also state the purpose and mission of the committee and that it is open to the community.

c. Closed Captioning: What progress was made since the last meeting?

Karen Perry: At Mercy Infusions there is some closed captioning on some channels – like the weather. She has an interest in the weather as it affects her travel and appointments.

Renee: Likes closed captioning. The MS Society is talking about this issue.

Lizette: Closed captioning is important but the news is often pre-recorded. Some events are also. In Maine this is an issue to be sure that they match (current vs pre-recorded news).

Martin: Closed captioning is not always on – for example, in the bars.

Michelle: She has some paperwork to share with the group about updates on captioning. Disability Rights Maine can also help with training so that information about closed captioning is current.

3. Karen McPhee provided an update on the city's ADA Self-Study

- a. Karen met with the two project managers who will be overseeing the ADA study. They will begin their work this month (May) and will also be meeting with the city manager to review the proposal. The meeting will discuss the facilities, including parks, open spaces, sidewalks and city buildings that will be assessed. Additionally, all city departments will be visited, policies will be reviewed and any issues around accessibility (including training needs) will be discussed and recommendations made to improve access.

The project managers are well-qualified and are excited about spending the warmer months in Maine. They were surprised to see how few buildings on the waterfront (Commercial Street) were accessible.

The project managers will be holding public forums for city residents to voice their concerns and the managers will also be meeting with the members of this committee for their input.

Renee: It is important to have a building director that helps with providing accurate information about truly accessible buildings in the city. Perhaps this information can be connected to the Assessor's Office.

Jill: There are access maps which are a national source that help with indicating which areas are accessible and can help to look at the map. Brattleboro, Vermont has many volunteers who made this happen in

their area. The site has many access maps including Rhode Island and Vermont. Maine has been slow to respond. The website is: <http://www.axsmap.com>

Renee: It is powerful to have access.

Jill: The OT Department at the University of New England (Biddeford, Portland) have been working on an accessibility study of Portland.

4, New Business

Jill: As part of the Aging in Place, the Age Friendly Committee continues to work on an age friendly business survey. It is a checklist for businesses to get an idea of the interior and exterior access as well as customer service. The Chamber of Commerce is helping to pilot this (since winter) and it is working on the checklist and a logo. Business can be lost due to inaccessibility.

Karen Perry: The interiors of stores are a concern of hers for mobility.

Jill: On June 15, there will be an Aging Summit from 9 am to 12 noon at the Woodfords Congregational Church.

Gina: The hearing devices that Michelle has been bringing to the meetings have been very helpful to members. She will be ordering some devices for the future meetings and with a long cord for the devices.

Michelle: Suggested that when the ordering takes place that Gina order covers for the headsets as people use them frequently and would like clean covers.

4. Old Business

Karen Perry: Tania emailed her to say that the new signage is working well in the areas of Preble and Oxford Streets.

Karen M: Tania also emailed her and asked for some additional signage. Karen forwarded the email to Jeremiah Bartlett who is also

helping out Karen Perry about some traffic issues around High and Congress Streets.

Karen Perry: Voiced a concern about the sidewalk cut downs which are not always even and create problems for people with rolling mobility aides.

Michelle: Maine deaf citizens who are older are having difficulty finding homes that meet their needs, especially for independent apartments and assisted living. Unfortunately, many are not deaf friendly and unaware of the needs of deaf people who might like one-floor living – perhaps with other individuals who are deaf. With ADA, there are inclusion issues but the deaf needs are somewhat different. This has been a topic of debate since 1998. If people want more information about this issue, they can contact John Shattuck or Meryl Troup who are involved with the Committee for Maine Deaf Senior Citizens.

In Arizona, there was a deaf building and HUD sued the group and won. It was due to the lack of inclusion.

(Please note a correction to the above statement emailed to the PDAC attendees by attendee Lisette Belanger on 5/9/17: “HUD sued (the state of) Arizona for building a senior citizen home due to be inclusive but after debates realized Arizona has good case so HUD dropped the lawsuit!”)

Gina: The Barron Center has dementia care that is separate. She is not sure if there are any individuals who are deaf.

Renee: Does Portland have an office for new residents who are disabled? (No). In Albany, NY, there is an office that will complete an assessment (one-stop shopping) to help (new residents) become productive community members.

Karen M. Perhaps this is a project that could be taken up when the new committee members are in place.

Karen Perry: Having interpreters as part of this service would help.

Jill: At Alpha One, there is some help with housing (making it accessible). There is not a national mandate to do these kinds of services (such as described by Renee). For example, Vermont held a national awareness day about disabilities and 400 people attended. Maine has not been as receptive to do these accessibility or ADA programs/activities.

Cheryl: Is a Peaks Island resident who has some concerns about pot holes and the busy traffic that makes mobility on the island challenging. There are many wheelchair users who have difficulty with safety on sidewalks and streets. There are also golf carts and bicycles that are causing busy traffic and mobility issues.

Gina: The city website has a menu item that says ***Fix It*** and citizen concerns can be shared there so the issue can be addressed to the appropriate department or fixed.

Cheryl: There are also a lot of seniors who do not have access to computers. **(Please see Karen McPhee's note at the end of the minutes regarding computer access for the island public).**

Jill: The Portland Bike and Pedestrian Committee might be a good contact to check out the issues (bikes, golf carts) that Cheryl described. The person in charge is Alex Pine. (Note: contact at PortlandMaineCicycle/PedestrianAdviroyCommittee@PortlandBikdePed.org).

The meeting adjourned at 12 noon.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen B. McPhee.
Recreation

Please note- computer access for the island public: Seniors and others who live on Peaks Island and do not have personal access to computers can contact the Peaks Island Library. There are five (5) computers that are available for public use. If a person is unfamiliar with computers but would like to share their issues about island needs

(traffic, safety, noise or other concerns that affect the general public, elders or those with disabilities), they can go to the city website and use the Fix It to register them. The librarian can assist the person with this.

When the library moves to the elementary school during the impending renovations, there will be computers available for public use. The librarian also mentioned that the main library has a technology team that will come to the island to do training and share various types of technology that may be of interest to residents.

The library has limited hours (about 20 per week) but are very willing to assist people. The phone number is 766-5540.