

**DISABILITY COMMISSION
ADVISORY BOARD MEETING**

Meeting Link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81008934107>

Wednesday January 19 2022
5:30-7:00p.m.

Meeting Agenda

- Meeting Called to Order
- Introductions
- Approval of December Minutes
- Presentation – Mayor’s Office for Immigrant Advancement - **Luigi Lalanne**
Boston Public Health Commission - **PJ McCann**
- Chair’s Report – **Olivia Richard**
- Member Spotlight - **Carl Richardson**
- Commissioner's Report – **Kristen McCosh**
- Announcements
- Old Business
- New Business
- Public Input
- Adjournment

Attendance:

Commissioner **Kristen McCosh**
Jerry Boyd
Paul Caron
Elizabeth Dean-Clower
Alice Fisher
Wesley Ireland
Dusya Lyubovskaya
Juan Carlos Ramirez -Tapia

Olivia Richard
Carl Richardson
Yardley Sanchez

Absent: Zary Amirhoussini

Staff: Andrea Patton, Patricia Mendez Christopher Morawski Sarah Leung Colleen Flanagan

Meeting called to order

Chair Olivia Richard called the meeting to order at 5:35pm

Approval of Minutes

Carl Richardson made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from December 2021 meeting, seconded by Juan Carols Ramirez-Tapia, all in favor and none opposed.

Presentations

Mayor's Office for Immigrant Advancement - Luigi Lalanne Community Engagement Coordinator

- MOIA Mayor's Office for Immigrant Advancement (MOIA) strives to strengthen the ability of immigrants to fully and equitably participate in economic, civic, social, and cultural life in Boston. MOIA also promotes the recognition and public understanding of the contributions of immigrants to the City.
- An overview of Boston's immigrant population was shared, including the top ten largest immigrant communities by country of origin, and a map showing the largest immigrant population in each of the City's 22 neighborhoods.
- Information about MOIA opportunities was shared including:
 - Free Immigration Consultation sessions twice per month, [Immigrants Lead Boston](#), [Dreamers Fellowship](#), [Immigration Information Corners](#), [Immigrant Professional Fellowship](#)
 - Lalanne showed a pie chart representing the most common inquiries the Office receives during the immigration consultation sessions. These include: family-based immigration, employment-based immigration, non-immigrant concerns, naturalization, criminal law, and more.
- Lalanne also shared information about MOIA's Strategic Plan for 2021-2023. This plan is built around the values of Stability, Integration, and Civic Ownership.

Questions and Comments from Members:

- Chairperson Olivia Richard asked what ‘humanitarian’ meant on the pie chart slide of the presentation. Lalanne answered that it essentially refers to people with humanitarian needs to integrate in Boston.
- Member Juan Carlos asked if interpreters are available to access MOIA services and how much advance notice is needed? Luidgi answered that interpreters in all languages are available, and does not need advanced notice because the office has access to a Language Line, but that to secure in-person interpretation would require more notice. He also mentioned that accommodations like ASL are available and they need two weeks in advance.
- Member Wesley Ireland asked two questions, first about what data the office has on immigrants with disabilities and how people with disabilities can request accommodations. Second, he noted that in his experience on the board of Deaf Inc. of Massachusetts, they’ve found funding challenges in that some federal and state funding sources are limited to citizens or people with certain immigration statuses. He asked about what resources MOIA has to help people who might fall in this gap
 - Lalanne - acknowledged a lack of data on immigrants with disabilities that the office would like to fix by better engaging the population, and noted they will provide any accommodations necessary. Regarding the second, he noted they haven’t encountered this issue, again probably due to a lack of outreach. He promised to reach out to Member Ireland for further discussion with MOIA.
- Member Elizabeth Dean-Clower made the point that there is a lot of stigma surrounding disability, especially in immigrant communities. She asked about MOIA’s work with students with disabilities from immigrant families in the Boston public schools.
 - Response: MOIA is working with the Disabilities Commission on this important issue

Boston Public Health Commission - PJ McCann

- Presenting on the B-Together Initiative, a response to the COVID19 public health emergency. This is an order that went into effect January 15th that required people over age 12 to show proof of vaccination.
 - Key dates and tips for how to show proof of vaccination were shared during the presentation.
- It was noted that the Mayor’s Commission on Disabilities does ADA Title II Coordination and that this policy impacts ADA Title I (employers) and III (places of public accommodations) entities. It was also noted that the office does not do

enforcement on ADA Title I and III, but has been a critical partner in the creation of the policy to ensure impacts on the disability community were considered.

- The Commission has provided guidance to area businesses on this new policy including best practices.
 - Businesses have been told that they must engage in a dialogue with customers who ask for reasonable accommodation.
 - Businesses can not ask for documentation that proves disability.
 - Boston businesses are used to accommodating people with disabilities and can discuss appropriate accommodations with people with disabilities.

Questions and Comments from Members:

- Member Jerry Boyd asked if the guidance Boston businesses is getting focuses on how to communicate with business customers or employees?
 - Response : Guidance is being given to businesses on how to communicate with both customers and employees with disabilities. The City does not give specific legal advice on employment concerns, but rather general policy guidance.
- Member Wesley Ireland: for those in food courts do they need to show proof of vaccination?
 - Response: The requirement under the policy is that signage be posted and cards be checked. There is discretion in deciding how to do that. It is required signage be posted in spaces dine-in in food courts. Ultimately it is the responsibility of the owner of the food court to ensure compliance. Some food courts may decide to check cards at the vendor sites, other food courts may post someone at the entrance of the dining area to ask before entering the food court.
 - City of Boston guidance for more common places with both take out and dine in is that the point of sale is an appropriate place to ask the customer if they plan to dine in, and to check the vaccine card at that point.
- Member Duysa asked first whether there are accommodations for people who are immunocompromised, what the status is of the City's distribution of at-home COVID tests, and finally what the guidance is for vaccine cards that might look different from the standard Massachusetts, or the US CDC card.
 - McCann responded that people who are immunocompromised should engage in a dialogue with the business about accommodations they need. Noted that generally speaking have received a great deal of support from immunocompromised individuals given the added level of public health protection the policy provides.
 - McCann noted that the City gave out 500,000 at home tests within weeks at the end of 2021. Identified other options, such as the federal government's

website to request 4 kits be mailed to your home. He also noted that the City reserved amounts for community outreach orgs to get them to marginalised communities including people with disabilities.

- Finally, McCann explained that a few deliberate policy decisions were made, first to not require businesses to check identification cards to make it easier for both immigrant communities and businesses. Along with that is some built in good faith expectations that businesses can accept many different kinds of proof of vaccination.

Chairs Report - Olivia Richard

- Mass.gov has a “trust the facts, get the vax” information series for all to be aware
 - She noted that receiving a free COVID-19 vaccine doesn’t trigger the public charge rule for immigrants
- Under a new policy, all people with disabilities using personal care attendant (PCA) services must use one fiscal intermediary, Tempus Unlimited. Informed the board timesheets for this process has been changed.
 - MassHealth is holding info sessions on this new process
 -

Member Spotlight - Carl Richardson

The floor was given to member Carl Richardson.

- Carl shared that has been a resident of Boston for more than 20 years.
- He is a Deaf-Blind person who wears hearing aids, uses a service dog, and that he uses screen readers and voice over assistive technology to access his devices.
- He has served on the Boston Disability Advisory Board for over ten years.
- He is the ADA Coordinator for the Massachusetts State House.
- He shared that he serves on the board of directors for: Guide Dog Users of Massachusetts, Carroll Center for the Blind, Open Door Arts, and DBCAN (Deaf-Blind Community Access Network).
- He is married, he and his wife have been married for 17 years and they enjoy going to the beach.
- He is a self described film buff and avid advocate for audio descriptions to be included in films, live theater, museums, television shows, streaming services, and serves as chair to the American Council of the Blind’s Audio Description Project.

The board was reminded to email Olivia or [Andrea Patton](#) if they are interested in being the next member spotlighted during our monthly meetings.

Commissioners Report

- Administrative Updates:

- Reappointment to the Mayor's Commission
- Mayor Wu reappointed Kristen McCosh as the City's Disability Commissioner. Commissioner McCosh shared that she is honored to be able to serve and enjoys working with everyone.
- Commissioner McCosh welcomed newly hired Colleen Flanagan as the new Outreach and Engagement Specialist. Colleen briefly introduced herself and said how excited she is to work with everyone.
- Boston City Council - The first meeting was convened and five new members were sworn into the Council.
- The Public Inauguration has been postponed.

Updates:

Mass & Cass

- Mayor has made a commitment to increase low threshold housing to address this issue.
- City outreach workers have been engaging with unhoused neighbors to learn their immediate needs.
- Low threshold housing has been introduced to this population.
 - Low threshold housing allows people to live with a partner and it does not require enrollment in any treatment program.
 - Current housing options are located at the Southampton Street Shelter, the Shattuck Hospital Cottage Community, Roundhouse Hotel, and Envision hotel
- Our office is thrilled with the Mayor's efforts on this issue.

Vaccines, Boosters, and Testing

- The COVID19 Omicron variant is surging and has hospitals over capacity. Vaccination is the best tool to stop the spread of this variant.
- Clear face masks are still available from the Disabilities Commission. Please email disability@boston.gov if you are interested in obtaining clear face masks.
- The Commission helped distribute test kits with the BPHC to community based organizations that serve people with disabilities. BCIL was given at-home rapid test kits, and SEIU 1199 were given test kits for personal care attendants (PCA's) who work for people with disabilities.
- Boston.gov has lots of information on vaccine and booster locations as well as walk-in testing locations. The testing site at the Bolling building in Neubain Square is a public walk-in testing site. You do not need to make an appointment at this location.

- The Commission has an extremely limited number of at-home rapid COVID test kits available for people in need who can not get out to a testing site. if you have ideas on how to distribute please email Andrea Patton
 - Federal government has information on to get at-home tests at : covidtests.gov

Captions Ordinance

- Thanks to Member Wesley Ireland for bringing this issue to our attention.
- Next steps are for Councilor Flynn to convene a working group. That group will be tasked with creating an implementation plan, including a timeline, for the ordinance.
- Spring 2022 we hope to launch this program

Architectural Access Update

- Upgrades will be made to the 3rd floor Mezzanine level of City Hall.
 - The City was awarded a grant from the Massachusetts Office on Disability to make this space more accessible to people with disabilities by adding a vertical lift.
- The Commissioner McCosh and the Commission's Architectural Access Director, Patricia Mendez will be testifying in support of three state legislative bills that the statewide architectural access board supports. Members of the board are invited to submit testimony to those state legislative hearings.
- Curb ramp settlement.
 - The Commission continues to work closely with the Public Works Department on related issues. The City submitted their first required annual report under the consent decree.
 - A form to submit information on curb ramps in need of attention is being created.

2022 Board membership and elections

- Two open Advisory Board seats are available
 - Kyle Robidoux formally resigned his seat in December 2021
 - Other seat has been vacant for some time.
- Six current members seats have expired
 - Think about your interest in continuing to serve
- In the Spring we will hold elections for the Executive Committee
 - Chair, vice chair, secretary, and treasure
 - You can nominate yourself or another advisory board member to be part of the election process for the Executive Committee

Board Elections

Anishi Moreno, Special Assistant to the Chief of Policy City Boards and Commissions

- Introduced herself to the Disability Advisory Board
- Shared that she will help to outreach for the two open seats on the board.
- Her work focuses on building better relationships and communication for commissions.
- Reminded the advisory board that nominations can be emailed to Kristen or Andrea
- Questions and for advisory board members
 - Asked if data for the advisory board meeting would be available?
 - Commissioner McCosh answered that they are working on strategies to collect data
 - Asked if the intake process would be more centralized now?
 - Anishi Moreno answered that she hopes to make the process more transparent following legislative guidelines.
 - Commissioner McCosh added that the bylaws for the Commission are available and noted that with every new Mayor comes new opportunities.

Announcements:

None

Old Business

- A member brought up that there has not been an update on the meeting with US Labor Secretary Marty Walsh that was discussed at previous meetings
 - Andrea Patton from the Commission noted that there has been some turnover in staff at the Office of Intergovernmental Relations, and that the Commission would hopefully have an update soon.
- Members expressed continued interest in a written agreement on City Hall Plaza's renovation

New Business

- Member Carl Richardson told the board that on 1/25 the Governor will deliver the state of the state.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn meeting was made at 7:20pm