



Commission
on
Disability

Commission on Disability DRAFT Minutes re May 13, 2026 meeting

North Berkeley Senior Center, Aspen Room
1901 Hearst Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94709

Preliminary Matters

1. Call to Order by Chair Fischer at 5:05pm
2. Land Acknowledgment recognizing Berkeley as the ancestral, unceded home of the Ohlone People.
3. Roll Call by Secretary
Commissioners present: Helen Walsh, Rena Fischer, Kathi Pugh, Mina Sun, Bonnie Lewkowicz, Jae Mann, Fred Nisen, and Valerie Coleman.
Commissioner absent: Richard Paz.
Staff present: Thomas Gregory.
Public members present: none
4. Public Comments - none
5. Approval of draft minutes: March 11, 2026 meeting
“...to approve the minutes as drafted.” Moved by: Pugh. Seconded by: Fischer.
Ayes: Walsh, Fischer, Pugh, Sun, Mann, Nisen, and Coleman. Abstention: Lewkowicz. The motion passes.
6. Approval: Order of Agenda
“...to approve the order of the agenda.” Moved by: Fischer. Seconded by: Lewkowicz. Ayes: Walsh, Fischer, Pugh, Sun, Lewkowicz, Mann, Nisen, and Coleman. The motion passes.

Discussion/Action Items

7. Updates from CoD subcommittees
 - a. Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)

Fischer reported that Crystal Hadley, the City’s Digital Communications Coordinator, is very effective at pushing the City towards digital accessibility.

Federal DOJ delayed the national WCAG deadline by a year.

The City has hired a consultant called Blind Institute of Technology (BIT) to conduct a City-wide audit re digital accessibility.

The City will be developing a transition plan re digital accessibility, and this plan will include training for staff, some of these trainings to be conducted by BIT; CoD’s input will be desired to inform this plan.

City-wide WCAG Task Force meets bi-weekly.

Hadley and Fischer are contemplating conducting a survey of community members re digital accessibility; Nisen recommended inviting BIT to collaborate on such a survey. Approximately 35 apps are attached to the website (e.g., an app to pay a parking

ticket, an app to register one's child for summer camp) and all of these app providers will need to verify WCAG compliance in order to continue contracting with the City long-term; approximately 15 of these providers have so far produced VPAT reports confirming their products' compliance.

The UCB student team that was working on a project pertaining to WCAG compliance has dropped out of the "Big Ideas" competition.

The City will soon be purchasing form-building software, and so many forms that are currently PDF-based will become WCAG-compliant online forms.

Digital event-promotion literature will require contact info for those with inquiries regarding accessibility.

The City Manager sent all-staff a memo saying that (a) City staff must hold their vendors accountable for the WCAG compliance of their products or else the vendor in question will need to be replaced and (b) City Attorney's Office and Finance Dept will develop new contractual language making WCAG compliance the vendor's obligation.

b. Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG)

Fischer reported that Transportation Manager Mark Helmbrecht's recommendation was to include language requiring PROWAG compliance to be added to operational specs.

COD's PROWAG recommendation needs to go back to the FITES Committee.

Fischer's draft letter contains the CoD input that needs to be sent to staff, and other commissioners will send Fischer any input they have re the draft letter by or before 5/18.

c. Accessibility at City Meetings and Events

Fischer felt that this subject is too broad and recommended that it be broken into smaller categories (e.g., address accessibility at public meetings separately from addressing accessibility at public events that are not meetings). Fischer also recommended that the focus should be on approaches and toolkits rather than on adding specific statements regarding accessibility to literature promoting events.

8. Work Plan Updates and Developments

Commissioner Reports/Announcements

Pugh: Grassroots Open Assistive Technology (GOAT), a coalition of local disability-focused CBOs, has acquired Wheelchairs Of Berkeley's inventory and is in need of a space to house a new Assistive Technology center that it intends to launch.

Walsh: The federal gov't extended the national WCAG deadline by one year. FEMA released its final report, which does not address functional access needs. The Center for Independent Living is collecting lived-experience stories from disabled people, caregivers, and allies about

navigating protected bike lanes and sidewalks.

Sun: the US Attorney's Office responsible for Northern California recently took its entire staff to LightHouse For The Blind for a tour and presentation, at which the US Attorney's Office stated that 95% of the cases it litigates are referred to the federal Dept of Justice (DOJ) via its online complaints portal. Also, the office litigates on behalf of individuals, not just class-action plaintiffs. The portal with which one may report complaints is here: [lodge a civil rights complaint with the federal DOJ](#).

Coleman: Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) has invited CBOs to apply for a Learning Lab program pertaining to land use, transportation, housing, and climate change, and applications are due by 5/31/26. The MTC application info can be found here: [apply for MTC's Power-Building and Engagement Program](#). The Kelsey and an MTC-funded consultant have partnered with Marin County on a pilot program promoting Universal Design, and the pilot's goal is to create a template that other jurisdictions can use.

Fischer: CPUC has funded (through 2026) a Bay Area-specific same-day wheelchair-accessible vehicle (WAV) ride service called Onward. Booking a ride requires providing at least two hours' notice, the cost of rides starts at \$6, and trips can be up to 60 miles long. Rides are only available until 6pm in the evening. Pugh reported having used this service and having found it useful.

Staff Updates

9. Log of Access Complaints
10. Email and voicemail sent to the Commission

Adjournment at 6:55pm

Minutes approved by CoD vote on: _____

Thomas Gregory, Secretary to Commission