



Commission
on
Disability

Commission on Disability

DRAFT Minutes re July 8, 2026 meeting

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

Preliminary Matters

1. Call to Order by Chair Fischer at 5:02pm
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, Mina Sun, Bonnie Lewkowicz, Jae Mann, Fred Nisen, and Valerie Coleman
Commissioner on a Leave of Absence: Richard Paz
Commissioner absent: Kathi Pugh
Staff present: Thomas Gregory, Presenter: Crystel Hadley
Public members present: Ann Freeman, Eric Knaresboro, Odile Lavault, and Kelly Hammergren

4. Public Comments

Lavault, a member of the City's Commission on Aging, introduced herself as the Commission on Aging's designated liaison to the Commission on Disability.

Knaresboro, a guide dog user, informed the commission that UC Berkeley has shut down the Hearst North Field, which has long been used by disabled Bay Area residents as a safe venue where their service dogs can benefit from recreation and socialization with other service animals while appropriately segregated from dogs that have not been trained as service animals. Mr. Knaresboro intends to ask City leadership to devote specific times at City dog parks to service dogs and their owners exclusively, and he would welcome advocacy from the Commission on Disability regarding this issue.

5. Approval of draft minutes: May 13, 2026 meeting

"...to consider approving May 13's draft minutes at the next Commission on Disability meeting." Moved by: Lewkowicz. Seconded by: Coleman. Ayes: unanimous. The motion passes.

6. Approval: Order of Agenda

"...to move item # 10 to the beginning of the Discussion/Action Items portion of the meeting and to otherwise approve the agenda as drafted." Moved by: Fischer. Seconded by: Sun. Ayes: unanimous. The motion passes.

Presentation

7. Conversation with Crystel Hadley, Digital Communications Coordinator for the City of Berkeley. What Works: Effectively Implementing Accessibility Changes in City/Title II

Areas. Lessons learned from the (ongoing) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) project.

Hadley introduced herself to the commission and reported that her involvement in the WCAG-compliance effort began in April of 2024 when the federal government announced that WCAG standards would be enforced come April of 2026 (an enforcement date that subsequently shifted to April of 2027). At that time she initiated conversations with leadership staff regarding how to meet expectations around digital accessibility. The effort toward WCAG compliance intensified significantly once Commission on Disability put forward its recommendation that contracts with vendors include language requiring that a vendor's digital products comply with WCAG. Soon afterward, Hadley began meeting with CoD's ad hoc committee on WACAG compliance and, in August of 2025, established a City-wide, approximately 20-member Task Force on WCAG compliance, with all departments represented. Hadley's Communications Team had some funding it was able to re-purpose and used these funds to contract with a vendor to perform an audit of the City's website; this contract was finalized in April of 2026, and the resulting audit is ongoing. The Communications Team is working with its web developer to address issues identified by the auditor. Separately, various trainings and tools (e.g., templates, step-by-step written guidance) have been provided to staff who generate content meant to be posted to the website. A major takeaway for Hadley is that leadership's buy-in is critical to such an effort's success. The City Manager has set the tone by communicating with all staff regarding the importance of WCAG compliance.

Commissioners and Public Input on this Topic

Fischer suggested that the WCAG Task Force could be a model for other inter-departmental task forces addressing other accessibility issues, and Hadley said that staff could propose this idea to leadership.

Sun stated that she had seen Hadley's training materials and found them useful and technically sound; however, Sun also noted that real change happens at the program staff level and that such staff must embrace the trainings and tools for this compliance effort to be successful.

Knaresboro, a member of the public commenting, stated that WCAG compliance is one of the most important issues that the City should be investing in.

Discussion/Action Items

8. Update on CoD and Public Works discussions on including PROWAG in the City bid and contracting process.

Fischer reported that the current 7/31/26 deadline for the FITES Committee to consider CoD's PROWAG-related item should be extended to 9/30/26 and presumably will be so extended. Fischer reported that CoD has asked the City to include language clearly highlighting the need for PROWAG compliance in: contact documents' boilerplate, pre-bid meetings, the first page of bid packets, post-bid roundtable meetings, and Traffic Control Plans (TCPs). CoD will also be asking that a single-page, generic document regarding PROWAG obligations accompany any site-

specific TCPs issued by the City. Fischer proposed that the City establish a dedicated webpage through which constituents could report PROWAG issues they encounter.

9. Developing accessibility guidelines for electric vehicle (EV) charging that impacts the public right-of-way, e.g., when cables cross sidewalks.

“...to take up this EV topic at our next meeting in September.” Moved by: Lewkowicz.

Seconded by: Fischer. Ayes: unanimous. The motion passes.

10. A request that the City conduct a supplemental accessibility analysis of the Bicycle Plan, with specific attention to accessibility in the public right-of-way.

Walsh reported that a “structured accessibility review” and/or a “supplemental accessibility analysis” is required to adequately implement the recently adopted Bike Plan update.

Commissioners and Public Input on this Topic

Coleman reported that expanding bike lane networks, especially regarding protected bike lanes, is new territory for most cities. Alta, the consultant engaged to support the development of the recent Bike Plan update, is reputable, but that doesn't mean the Bike Plan would not benefit from an accessibility review. Let's advocate that the City more fully consider the access-related ramifications of how it is expanding the City's bike lane networks.

Fischer invited the commission to consider its next move, advising that it would be more appropriate for CoD to put forward specific recommendations (as opposed to requesting an accessibility analysis be performed by a hired consultant). Coleman concurred with Fischer that any requests by CoD be very targeted and specific.

Sun recommended caution about CoD proposing specific solutions, stating that such input should come from experts with relevant lived experience (which some, but not all, CoD members are).

Freeman reported that during a trip to UCB's Zellerbach Hall, she had to park in a blue spot on the left-hand side of one-way Bancroft. Because Freeman's van lift was on the vehicle's passenger side (as are most such lifts), she was forced to enter an active motor traffic lane as she exited her vehicle. Moreover, she subsequently needed to cross an active bike lane in order to access the nearest curb cut.

Hammargren reported that \$300K was spent on the consultant who helped develop the recent Bike Plan update and that it is frustrating that the result was a plan that failed to address all aspects of accessibility. She also reported that more bike lanes are currently being proposed for Hopkins Street and that this proposal is scheduled to be considered by City Council on 7/28/26.

Commissioner Reports/Announcements

Staff Updates

- 12. Log of Access Complaints
- 13. Email and voicemail sent to the Commission

Adjournment at 7:26pm

Minutes approved by CoD vote on: _____

Thomas Gregory, Secretary to Commission