

CALIFORNIA COMMISSION ON DISABILITY ACCESS FULL COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes
October 23, 2024

1. Call to Order

Chair Chris Downey welcomed everyone and called the meeting of the California Commission on Disability Access (CCDA or Commission) to order at 10:03 a.m. The meeting was on Zoom, via teleconference, and held at the Division of the State Architect, Los Angeles Regional Office, 355 South Grand Avenue, Suite 2100, Los Angeles, California 90071.

Housekeeping

Staff Member Strother reviewed the meeting protocols.

Roll Call

Staff Member Strother called the roll and confirmed the presence of a quorum.

Commissioners Present:

Chris Downey, Chair
Brian Holloway, Vice Chair
Rob Bonta, Attorney General, by Deputy Attorney General Ben Conway
Ida Clair, State Architect*
Drake Dillard*¹
Dr. Souraya Sue ElHessen*
Jacqueline Jackson*
Scott Lillibridge
Hector Ramirez*
Sarahann Shapiro

*Participated remotely

¹ a.m. only

Commissioners Absent:

Juan Alanis, Assembly Member
Matt Haney, Assembly Member
Melissa Hurtado, Senator
Rosilicie Ochoa Bogh
Dr. Luciana Profaca
Ashley Leon-Vazquez

Staff Present:

April Dawson Rawlings, Executive Director
Debbie Mallari, Legal Counsel
Stephanie Groce, Data and Research Analyst
Phil McPhaul, Operations Manager

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Sabina Nakarmi, Program Technician
Abigail Ridge, Administrative and Legislative Analyst
Presley Strother, Marketing and Outreach Analyst
Amber Thomas, Education and Outreach Analyst

Also Present:

Melerie Michael, Legislative Consultant, Office of Legislative Affairs, California
Department of General Services

Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Downey led the Commission in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes (June 26, 2024) – Action

Motion: Commissioner Lillibridge moved to approve the June 26, 2024, California Commission on Disability Access Full Commission Meeting Minutes as presented. Commissioner Shapiro seconded. There was no public comment on the motion. Motion carried 7 yes, 0 no, and 0 abstain, per roll call vote as follows:

The following Commissioners voted “Yes”: Commissioners Dr. ElHessen, Jackson, Lillibridge, Ramirez, and Shapiro, Vice Chair Holloway, and Chair Downey.

3. Comments from the Public on Issues Not on this Agenda – Discussion

No members of the public addressed the Commission.

4. CCDA Elections – Action

Chair Downey asked for nominations for Chair of the California Commission on Disability Access for 2025. He nominated himself. No other nominations were made.

Vice Chair Holloway moved to close nominations for Chair.

a. Chair

Motion: Commissioner Shapiro moved to re-elect Chris Downey as Chair of the California Commission on Disability Access for 2025. There was no public comment on the motion. Motion carried 8 yes, 0 no, and 0 abstain, per roll call vote as follows:

The following Commissioners voted “Yes”: Commissioners Dillard, Dr. ElHessen, Jackson, Lillibridge, Ramirez, and Shapiro, Vice Chair Holloway, and Chair Downey.

Chair Downey asked for nominations for Vice Chair of the California Commission on Disability Access for 2025. He nominated Brian Holloway. No other nominations were made.

Commissioner Shapiro moved to close nominations for Vice Chair.

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b. Vice Chair

Motion: Commissioner Shapiro moved to re-elect Brian Holloway as Vice Chair of the California Commission on Disability Access for 2025. There was no public comment on the motion. Motion carried 8 yes, 0 no, and 0 abstain, per roll call vote as follows:

The following Commissioners voted “Yes”: Commissioners Dillard, Dr. ElHessen, Jackson, Lillibridge, Ramirez, and Shapiro, Vice Chair Holloway, and Chair Downey.

5. 2025 CCDA Meeting Calendar – Action

Motion: Commissioners voted to approve the 2025 CCDA Meeting Calendar as presented. There was no public comment on the motion. Motion carried 8 yes, 0 no, and 0 abstain, per roll call vote as follows:

The following Commissioners voted “Yes”: Commissioners Dillard, Dr. ElHessen, Jackson, Lillibridge, Ramirez, and Shapiro, Vice Chair Holloway, and Chair Downey.

6. Commission Tribute – Discussion

a. Commissioner Drake Dillard

Executive Director Dawson Rawlings stated, at the last meeting of the year, a Commissioner is highlighted who has made distinctive contributions to the community and the Commission over the past year. She acknowledged Commissioner Dillard for his help in editing and finalizing the Accessible Parking Campaign Toolkit, his commitment to equity and young people, and his efforts to ensure that all voices are heard. She stated Commissioner Dillard is active with the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and was instrumental in the Destination Crenshaw Revitalization Project.

Executive Director Dawson Rawlings stated a video interview with Commissioner Dillard will be posted to the CCDA social media pages.

Chair Downey stated appreciation for Commissioner Dillard on behalf of the Commission for his dedication and contributions to the community in the Los Angeles area and to the work of the Commission this past year, and for his leadership of the Checklist Committee.

Commissioners added their congratulations and thanks.

7. CCDA’s Bylaw Revision – Action

Executive Director Dawson Rawlings stated every two years the CCDA Executive Committee reviews the Commission’s bylaws and makes any necessary updates for review and approval by the full Commission. She stated, over the past year, the Executive Committee, legal counsel, and staff have worked on bylaw revisions. She noted that the proposed changes do not fundamentally alter anything but better reflect

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how the CCDA does business. She reviewed the proposed draft of the revised CCDA bylaws, which were included in the meeting materials. Updates included deleting sections that were no longer relevant, updating code sections, deleting redundant language, and adding missing sections to better reflect how the CCDA does business.

Discussion

Commissioner Shapiro referred to Bylaw 8.2.1.2 on the Legislative Committee and stated her understanding that the Commission neither advocates nor takes positions on legislation. She asked about recommendations the Legislative Committee can offer the Commission.

Executive Director Dawson Rawlings stated the intent behind that bylaw was to address one of the things the Commission has been asked to do, which is to provide recommendations to the Legislature when asked how proposed legislation will impact the disability community.

Commissioner Dr. ElHessen asked about writing letters of support.

Executive Director Dawson Rawlings stated the Commission cannot take positions on legislation.

Commissioner Ramirez asked for clarification on the protocols in working with the California Department of General Services (DGS), Office of Legislative Affairs.

Executive Director Dawson Rawlings stated Melerie Michael, Legislative Consultant, Office of Legislative Affairs, DGS, is having technical difficulties at the moment but will respond to Commissioner Ramirez's question during her presentation later today.

Chair Downey asked for a motion to approve the CCDA's revised bylaws.

Motion: Commissioner Shapiro moved to approve CCDA's revised bylaws as presented. Commissioner Dr. ElHessen seconded. There was no public comment on the motion. Motion carried 8 yes, 0 no, and 0 abstain, per roll call vote as follows:

The following Commissioners voted "Yes": Commissioners Dillard, Dr. ElHessen, Jackson, Lillibridge, Ramirez, and Shapiro, Vice Chair Holloway, and Chair Downey.

8. CCDA's Outreach Projects – Update and Discussion

Executive Director Dawson Rawlings presented her report:

a. Educational Webinars

- The Georgia Statewide Independent Living Centers (SILC) helped to create a movie about the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The movie is a good introduction to the history of the ADA and how it applies to today's world. Staff will be partnering with the Georgia SILC to host a Q&A on October 29th about the movie. Commissioner Dr. ElHessen will moderate the session.

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- The CCDA just finished a successful year of partnering with the Pacific ADA Center on a series of webinar trainings covering a number of accessibility topics.

b. Future Plans

- The Pacific ADA Center has requested partnering with the Commission on additional webinars in 2025.
- Staff is partnering with the DGS Office of Public Affairs on a series of 10 videos that introduce the work of CCDA in video form and a myth-busters series on accessibility.
- The Accessible Parking Toolkit has been published, is available on the website, and is being translated into multiple languages.
- All trainings, webinars, listening forums, and meetings are posted on the CCDA YouTube channel.

Discussion

Chair Downey stated he will be unable to attend the education webinar and Q&A session on October 29th but encouraged Commissioners to attend. It is important to review the history of the ADA.

Commissioner Lillibridge stated it is great for the CCDA to be involved in making the video series. He volunteered to be an actor for upcoming videos.

Dr. ElHessen asked Commissioners to get the word out about the educational webinar and Q&A session in their communities. She stated the hope that this series will help generations to come to learn about the work that went into the passage of the ADA.

Chair Downey suggested opening it up to members of the public to make their own videos about disability access. Perhaps there might be a way to involve youth.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

9. CCDA Executive Director Report – Discussion

a. Administrative and Operational

Executive Director Dawson Rawlings provided a brief update on the work of the Commission since the last Commission meeting:

Program Highlights

- The CCDA conducted a listening forum for the business and disability community in July. Attendees included representatives from the area center for independent living and chambers of commerce.
- The CCDA partnered with the Pacific ADA Center to conduct two webinar trainings for businesses in July and September.

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- Executive Director Dawson Rawlings represented the CCDA at a disability pride event at the Governor's office.
- Executive Director Dawson Rawlings attended the Youth Leadership Forum luncheon with Staff Member McPhaul, Deputy Director Brent Jamison and Deputy Director Paul Dixon of the Department of General Services (DGS).
- Commissioner Dillard hosted Executive Director Dawson Rawlings for a day this summer in Los Angeles. He gave a tour of the Crenshaw District and introduced Executive Director Dawson Rawlings to a local business owner, Greg Dulan, who had utilized funding to upgrade his restaurant.
- Executive Director Dawson Rawlings attended the California Contractors State License Board (CSLB) board meeting to present on CCDA's Accessible Parking Campaign.

Commissioner Vacancies

- There is one vacancy on the CCDA representing the interests of people with disabilities. The appointment authority is the Senate Rules Committee.

Reappointments

- Commissioner Leon-Vazquez, a Speaker of the Assembly appointee, is awaiting reappointment.

Presentations/Conferences/Meetings Attended

- Executive Director Dawson Rawlings reviewed her list of conferences and meetings attended since the last Commission meeting.

Financial/Operational Highlights

- CCDA management continues to meet with DGS Budgets and Contracts monthly.
- The 2024-25 approved budget shifted funding for the CCDA from the General Fund to the Disability Access Account. No change was made to the High Frequency Litigant Fund.
- Staff is working with the DGS Real Estate Services Division on the lease renewal. The current CCDA lease expires in two years, but the process starts early.
- The conference room is being upgraded with integrated Teams equipment that will allow the CCDA to conduct hybrid meetings with stakeholders more efficiently.

Executive Director Dawson Rawlings reviewed the Fourth Quarter Financial Report:

- The total budget authority, which includes the Disability Access Account and the High Frequency Litigant Fund that is used for special projects is \$2.5 million.

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- The total operating dollars from the Disability Access Account is approximately \$1.6 million. As of the Fourth Quarter, the CCDA spent approximately \$1.3 million
- The total amount of the High Frequency Litigant Fund was \$942,000. As of the Fourth Quarter, the CCDA spent \$297,339.

Discussion

Vice Chair Holloway stated, as always, he is impressed with the amount of hard work that is accomplished by staff and what great good this organization does with its limited budget.

Break

The Commission took a 20-minute break.

10. Presentation: California Business Properties Association (CBPA) – Discussion

Presenter:

- Matthew Hargrove, President and Chief Executive Officer, CBPA

Staff Member McPhaul read the biography for the speaker, which was included in the meeting materials.

Matthew Hargrove, President and Chief Executive Officer, CBPA, provided an overview, with a slide presentation, of the background, focus areas, activities, and key issues that impact the commercial real estate industry, such as accessibility. He stated the CBPA is a one-stop-shop for the CCDA on issues related to accessibility and commercial real estate. He stated the CBPA sees the CCDA as a partner. That partnership has helped the CBPA better serve its tenants and members of the public that come into their facilities.

Mr. Hargrove stated an area to bring individuals together to discuss issues was needed to come up with pragmatic and practical solutions to what some of the individuals felt were abuses of the ADA laws, while others felt they were pushing forward civil rights for those who had disabilities. There was a great chasm between these two points of view. Something like the CCDA was needed to bring those points of view together for rational discussion. Over the years, the CCDA has played that role amazingly. There have been changes in state law that would not have happened were it not for the conversations that were happening between state entities, advocates for commercial real estate, and advocates for the ADA.

Mr. Hargrove acknowledged Commissioner Shapiro, CBPA Board Member, and the current Chair of the Building Owners and Managers Association, and stated she is an amazing contact who can address real estate entities and the disability community as a family member of a person with lived experience. He thanked Commissioner Shapiro for her service and knowledge in this area.

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Mr. Hargrove stated the CBPA is proud to host and sponsor CCDA events including the CCDA listening forums. Listening forums are important to help communities better understand what the Commission does and why it is an important resource, especially to small businesses.

Mr. Hargrove thanked the Commission for their partnership and Executive Director Dawson Rawlings for her hard work and motivation on the Commission's behalf to ensure that she has developed a relationship with the CBPA in a way that the CBPA is thankful for and its members appreciate. He stated the CBPA wants to continue working with the CCDA on more of its initiatives moving forward.

There were no questions from Commissioners and no public comment.

11. Legislative Bill Reporting – Update and Discussion

Melerie Michael, Legislative Consultant, Office of Legislative Affairs, DGS, presented her report:

a. Review of 2023-24 Legislative Session

The regular legislative session for 2024 has ended. The Legislature has adjourned until December 2, 2024. She provided an update on the bills that are of interest to the CCDA.

- Assembly Bill (AB) 1757 relates to internet websites and accessibility. This bill was held in Senate Appropriations and did not move forward. Some version of this bill may be reintroduced next year.
- AB 3279 relates to the annual state bar. This bill was signed by the Governor and is chaptered.

b. Upcoming 2025 Legislative Session

Ms. Michael stated she will continue to track and monitor bills of interest to the CCDA.

Ms. Michael responded to Commissioner Ramirez's earlier question about the CCDA taking public positions on bills. She stated the DGS does not take public positions on bills without prior authorization but it does provide confidential bill analyses to the Governor's Office with a recommendation on action. Feedback received from CCDA staff and Commissioners is taken into consideration while working on bill analyses.

Discussion

Commissioner Dr. ElHessen asked how influential the CCDA's input is.

Ms. Michael stated CCDA feedback is taken seriously as subject matter experts.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

12. CCDA Projects and Meetings – Update and Discussion

Executive Director Dawson Rawlings presented her report:

a. Project Docket

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Website Accessibility Toolkit

- The purpose of the toolkit is to educate businesses on how to ensure their websites are accessible to individuals with disabilities. It does not contain legal advice but is a compilation of best practices and ways to get information on technical assistance.
 - Staff has solicited feedback on the working draft from different government agencies.
- Information on how to make websites accessible is posted on the website put out by partners such as the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR).

CCDA Legal Portal

- Staff is analyzing the drop-down codes in the CCDA Legal Portal and updating the key codes to better reflect the meaning of the submitted complaints for improved data collection. The work will be done in phases with input from users of the Legal Portal.

b. 2025 Meetings of the Commission and Standing Committees

- Commission meetings in 2025 will be coupled with listening forums to maximize resources.

Discussion

Chair Downey stated web accessibility is a pressing issue and a challenge, especially without a strong legal foundation from which to follow to minimize risks to business owners and maximize accessibility to the disability community.

Commissioner Shapiro asked if the top ten alleged disability access violations are considered when thinking about future projects.

Executive Director Dawson Rawlings stated part of what staff does when considering where to hold listening forums is to look where violations are happening. She agreed that the top ten violations should be intentionally discussed more with Commissioners.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

13. Next Full Commission Meeting – Update and Discussion

Executive Director Dawson Rawlings stated the next full Commission meeting will be held in Burlingame on March 26, 2025. The agenda will include updates on the strategic plan and current Commission projects. She stated she is working with local partners to put together a listening forum after the Commission meeting.

There were no questions from Commissioners and no public comment.

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Executive Director Dawson Rawlings announced that Staff Member McPhaul will be leaving the CCDA on November 8, 2024. She thanked him for his years of service and wished him the best in his new position.

Commissioners shared their gratitude and appreciation for Staff Member McPhaul's work on the Commission and wished him well.

14. Future Agenda Items – Discussion

Chair Downey asked Commissioners for suggestions for the next agenda.

No future agenda items were offered.

15. Adjourn

Chair Downey thanked everyone for participating and asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion: Vice Chair Holloway moved to adjourn the October 23, 2024, California Commission on Disability Access Full Commission Meeting. Commissioner Shapiro seconded. Motion carried 7 yes, 0 no, and 0 abstain, per roll call vote as follows:

The following Commissioners voted "Yes": Commissioners Dr. ElHessen, Jackson, Lillibridge, Ramirez, and Shapiro, Vice Chair Holloway, and Chair Downey.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:52 p.m.