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Mayor

COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES
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BILLY HUANG
Chairperson

Commission on Disabilities - Meeting Minutes

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

March 14, 2022, 6:00 – 7:30 pm

- Present:** Billy Huang (Chair), Tricia Palluzzi, Grisel Aguilar, Robin Tousey-Ayers, Linda McDonough, Nina Silva, Sally Esposito
- Absent:** Arya Singh
- Staff:** Gretchen Knauff
- Guests:** John Wardzala

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair B. Huang at 6:09 PM.

II. Approval of February 15, 2022 Minutes

A Quorum was established, and the Commission Members reviewed and approved the minutes from February 15, 2022. S. Esposito and A. Harper abstained as they were absent at the prior meeting.

III. Old Business

A. Elevator Discussion with Sal DeCola

Recap of the Feb 15 meeting with Sal DeCola – long discussion about who is responsible for what. G. Knauff – LCI seems most obvious choice, but no decision made, though S. DeCola suggested calling LCI for now. Some discussion re. requiring Landlords to post notifications outside elevators on all floors. Will meet again on May 10 at 10am. L. McDonough suggested inviting/capturing stories of people personally impacted by this. S. Esposito – we’ve made more progress on this issue than in the past. Even more important than before given number of high-rise buildings going up. Good idea to get some stories, could ask Community Management Teams. T. Palluzzi – maintenance contracts are costly, but elevators last approx. 20 years longer if regularly maintained. And parts usually available immediately. G. Knauff – city staff know that people are affected, but they still don’t want to take responsibility. B. Huang – key for one department to take ownership. S. Esposito – calls could come into different places – need to be a central place to log complaints where anyone can check it as needed. Could look at other cities to get ideas. J. Wardzala – would SeeClickFix work? B. Huang – potentially, but not everyone uses SeeClickFix. G. Knauff – an afterhours LCI # could work. B. Huang – we have data from fire marshal re. calls about broken elevators, but no follow up data.

B. Jaigantic

Jaigantic meeting set for Friday. Just a check-in – not likely to be any major updates. There was article in NHI recently about their plans. Likely to be lots of jobs for people with disabilities. This group should continue to be out in front, stay connected with the Jaigantic group.

C. Ordinance language update

G. Knauff – asked Corporation Counsel if charter revision needed for proposed language change but has not heard back. Could contact Alder Furlow (chair of legislative committee) about making the changes.

IV. Debrief from Feb 5, 2022 Planning Meeting – Consider issue brought by A. Harper

A. Harper – while the organization I work for was doing planning for Community Crisis Response Team we learned that it was quite challenging to get an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter for events (online and in person). Had thought City could organize but they did not. (ended up using Source Interpreting and LifeBridge). Learned about how frustrating it is for people who need interpretation when it is not made available. Group at CT Mental Health Center that services people who are deaf and hard of hearing is very focused on this issue. G. Knauff – put money in her budget for interpretation services – we should attend public hearing on the budget to support it. S. Esposito – the City could require that any contracted service providers engage interpreters. A. Harper – if the City had required it we would have put money for this in the budget. S. Esposito – can we invite Mayor to discuss this issue with him? G. Knauff – given the number of events it may be more cost-effective for the city's communications office to hire a person. Also, with LifeBridge/Source Interpreting you need to plan it in advance – can't get people on drop of a hat. L. McDonough – while working in West Haven tax office, as a Spanish speaker she was available to interpret in other departments and get paid for it, just had to check with her supervisor that was a good time. G. Aguilar – could we use ASL students as internships? G. Knauff – a little harder with ASL because person needs to be certified. B. Huang – could legal action be taken against city? G. Knauff – someone could bring a discrimination complaint. G. Aguilar – no Spanish interpreter is ever offered at probate court. A. Harper – I can talk to the people at CMHC and try to connect with others with lived experience. S. Esposito – we should talk with Mayor – this could be a legal issue, is he willing to take that risk? G. Knauff – notices go out before meetings, it does say that you can call her office if you need ASL 72 hours before. But, agendas don't go out early enough, can't usually schedule an interpreter at short notice. Ideally, agendas would go out a week before meeting. B. Huang – has taken notes on planning template.

V. Other

G. Aguilar – Victoria's Secret has a Puerto Rican model with Down Syndrome, is very exciting.

G. Knauff – met with Connecticut DOT staff regarding trains and spent time with customer service people who want to do focus groups to hear from people with disabilities as they develop RFPs for new trains. Had sent her information about AIRA – a service for people who are blind/low-vision where they can get help navigating an airport, pharmacy etc. via an app. She shared a 2 min demo video.

VI. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30pm