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COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES
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BILLY HUANG
Chairperson

Commission on Disabilities - Meeting Minutes

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

May 9, 2022, 6:00 – 7:30 pm

- Present:** Billy Huang (Chair), Tricia Palluzzi, Grisel Aguilar, Robin Tousey-Ayers, Linda McDonough, Sally Esposito, Annie Harper
- Absent:** Nina Silva, Arya Singh
- Staff:** Gretchen Knauff
- Guests:** None

I. Call to Order

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

II. Approval of April 11, 2022 Minutes

The minutes from April 11, 2022 were approved. A. Harper will complete March 2022 minutes before the next meeting.

III. Chair report

- i) B. Huang met with Alder Sabin, he will attend our meeting in June to tell us more about his Downtown for All vision.
- ii) B. Huang attended 3-day 'Solve' conference at MIT, included focus on equity and access. Two particularly interesting presentations i) person who started Otsimo app to help students with autism learn/stay engaged - <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/otsimo-speech-therapy-slp/id1440975537>, ii) beeline reader app to help people with dyslexia with their reading <https://www.beelinereader.com/>. Lots of people in tech space thinking about disability.
- iii) important work at the Housing Collective to integrate housing and behavioral/mental health services (in partnership with Program for Recovery and Community Health – PRCH). Will start with Learning Collaborative to explore gaps/opportunities.

IV. Department report

- i) G. Knauff has been working a group on Emergency Preparedness for people with disabilities, focusing on emergency managers and first responders, also open to others. Goal is to make sure that Emergency Preparedness is inclusive of people with disabilities. June 15 and June 22 9-11am. In partnership with orgs including Independent Living Centers, Red Cross, State of CT. Goal is that Independent Living Centers will become the experts on this issue and provide TA as needed. R. Tousey-Ayers was at Housatonic Community College when there was an emergency, and she was not impressed by the response. G. Knauff – there was a bomb scare at City Hall the other day, raised the issue of what the plan for people with disabilities is when the elevators are closed during an emergency. S. Esposito – there are refuge areas, but need to be sure they are available. And

have staff been trained to make sure that people with disabilities are protected? Could invite R. Fontana to attend our meeting later in the fall to talk about Emergency Operations specifically as it concerns City Hall. G. Aguilar – during an emergency at Reginald Mayo school 3 weeks ago, school did excellent job with the 6 classrooms with children with special needs. S. Esposito – we could start by asking R. Fontana if there is a plan/can he share with us. Decision made to table this issue for now, revisit later.

ii) We should all spread the word about free smoke alarms being made available in certain neighborhoods on 5-21-22, also resource event same day at the Q House.

iii) Gretchen has been working with legislative committee re. the ordinance language changes.

V: Continue 2022 planning:

i) R. Tousey-Ayers - Arts and Ideas brochure has arrived, we should check that they are doing what is needed so that events are accessible. One year Disability Commission had a booth showing children how to do sign language. G. Knauff – plans to do disability access event on the green, with help from the Center for Disability Rights, the commission should have some presence at that.

ii) G. Aguilar – reminds us of plan to ensure that summer camps are inclusive. T. Palluzi – it's a big job, need to get parks and rec, special ed in the room. They say they don't have the resources necessary to hire the right staff – eg. T. Palluzi's son needs trained one-on-one support. G. Knauff – Parks and Rec have an obligation under ADA. Also schools may offer something. T. Palluzi – there is a program for the month of July. We could talk to Dr. Dalal about this. There are ways we can do things without resources. Right now she pays for her son to go to a camp but it is costly. G. Aguilar – fed up with people making excuses, not acting. B. Huang – is there a point person at the city to talk to about this? G. Knauff – would be Dr. Dalal or supervisor of parks and rec. R. Tousey-Ayers – need to be having an ongoing conversation with folks, should check in with Parks and Rec to remind them of their obligations/share our thoughts. Should maybe have a yearly meeting scheduled. T. Palluzi – need to find out when they start the planning process. G. Knauff – also need to raise awareness so that people know what their rights are. G. Aguilar – so frustrated, currently working with 6 kids under age 5 with special needs who are homeless. It is so frustrating that she can't help them. Parents can't cope, but DCF no longer takes kids from families. R. Tousey-Ayers – DCF does try to keep family together, is the current policy. L. McDonough – works at a summer camp, they start planning in December, take applications in March, are filled by May – there are not enough spaces. B. Huang – should find a contact to work on this with. L. McDonough – should collect data so that we have facts to build on.

VI. Old Business

i) Communication accessibility: A. Harper continuing to work on this.

ii) Jaigantic – v. interested in assistive technology and how that will help people with disabilities to work with them. They will be visiting the New England Assistive Technology Center in Hartford.

iii) Ordinance Language update – G. Knauff working on it with alders.

iv) Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center – T. Palluzi continuing to work on it. Will contact in July to set something up for the fall.

v) G. Knauff - there will be an elevator ordinance amendment meeting tomorrow – we are all invited. Was sent updated ordinance that notes that Building Official is responsible for enforcing the ordinance. G. Knauff frustrated that decision was made with no consultation with Disability Commission. At previous meetings, the building department expressed that they automatically are called for buildings over 4 storied. G. Knauff is concerned because the Fair Housing laws and elevator ordinance would require action for any stories not on ground level. T. Palluzi – 4 units defines multi-family dwelling. S. Esposito – makes sense for Building Inspector to be responsible as that person has considerable authority. G. Knauff – need to raise awareness so people know their rights. S. Esposito – can include notices in tax notifications (many renters have cars), also mayoral alert system. R. Tousey-Ayers – concerned that the document states that action is only required after 3 days. S. Esposito – best to leave that for now, if we have data that shows 3 days is not long enough we can change it later. B. Huang – asks G. Knauff to update us after the meeting tomorrow.

VII. New Business

- i) parking garage issue. S. Esposito – recently when using Air Rights garage there were problems with drivers not having correct tickets, drivers being asked to use different entrances. Was a mess. Will be doing a walk-through with Doug Hausladen, head of parking authority, about this. Need someone to help with fourth floor tickets. R. Tousey-Ayers – part of the problem is that the Air Rights Garage owned by corporate entity that is difficult to communicate with. S. Esposito – but Yale should also take responsibility – a customer service issue for the hospital.
- ii) other new business tabled to next meeting

VII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:43pm.