

Commission on Disabilities - Meeting Minutes

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

June 12, 2023, 6:00 – 7:30 pm

Present: Tricia Palluzzi, Sally Esposito, Sandra Roberts, Linda McDonough, Grisel Aguilar, Carmen Correa-Rios, Annie Harper

Absent: Billy Huang, Ben Bond

Staff: Gretchen Knauff

Guests: Lena Esposito (Commission Member-to-be), Kate Moore Healy (Long Wharf Theater)

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Tricia Palluzzi at 6:12 PM.

II. Approval of the May 8, 2023, Minutes - Sally Esposito made a motion to approve the minutes and Carmen Correa-Rios seconded. The minutes were passed unanimously with Linda McDonough abstaining.

III. Effective Communication – Annie Harper was not present to report. Gretchen gave a brief update. Annie sent a July 12, 2023, at 6 PM meeting request to the effective communication group. She is waiting for responses. Sally reported that she talked with the mayor about the effective communication issue at a recent community meeting. As he requested, she forwarded related correspondence but has not received a response to date.

Linda asked what was in the letter and Gretchen provided a few of the requests in the letter but also indicated that she would send the letter and the reply to everyone.

All Commissioners agreed to invite the Mayor to a Commission meeting after the July 12, 2023, meeting with effective communication group. Sally made a motion and Linda seconded it. The motion is: The Commission on Disabilities will meet with the Mayor about effective communication after the July 12, 2023, meeting with effective communication group. The motion passed unanimously.

Everyone agreed that Billy, as Chair of the Commission, should make the formal request.

IV. Commissioner Highlight/Sally Esposito - Sally provided the Commissioners with a little information about herself. She has a sister with a disability who experienced disability related to discrimination when applying to nursing school. Both she and another sister are DES daughters, and Sally has been active in DES Action in the USA, Connecticut Branch. Smith College has a library archive related to DES.

Sally has been a history teacher, a school counselor, the Director of Disability Services in New Haven, and worked at SERC. She went to law school at Quinnipiac University, where she had a concentration in alternative dispute resolution which she used at SERC. She also worked at Yale as the director of the Disability Resource Office and was a temporary clerk at Milford Superior Court.

Sally joined the Commission in 2015 and has about one year left. She has been active in her local community management team and the community gardens.

Note: There was a brief break in the agenda to introduce the Commission to Kate Moore (Long Wharf Theater), and to learn a little bit more about Kate. She is a member of the newly formed Accessibility Team at Long Wharf Theater.

V. Old Business

- A. Elevator Ordinance - Gretchen reported that there has been some progress on the elevator ordinance and that the small work group has completed a draft of proposed ordinance changes. The group is working on a meeting with LCI for a review and their commentary before bringing it to the larger group.
- B. Jaigantic Employment Group Update– There is nothing new to report on Jaigantic. Apparently, they also have been nonresponsive to other city staff and departments, and nobody really knows what is happening with them.
- C. Notification System for Individuals with Autism (Tricia) - Gretchen is working with the NHPD to bring the notification system to the New Haven Police Department. The Department representative indicated that this is something that they would be willing to do. Gretchen sent them the Walk with Derek form for their review. Gretchen and Tricia will continue to work on the issue with NHPD and Jennifer Harding of Walk with Derek.
- D. Big Read/One Read - Most of the events of the Big Read have been completed. Members of the Commission attended various events and assisted with the planning. They also educated Festival staff about physical and program accessibility required at these events.

The last event on the Big Read schedule is the Disability Justice Resource Fair on June 21 from Noon to 5PM. The Commission and the Disability Services Office will have a table at the Resource Event. Gretchen will create a flyer that encompasses both the Commission and the Department. Carmen agreed that she would translate it into Spanish. The flyer will be available at the resource fair.

Members of the Commission provided Sally with their availability to staff the event.

VI. Legislative Forum - The group discussed the possibility of holding a legislative forum that informs the public about legislation affecting people with disabilities in Connecticut. The members of the Commission were interested in having a forum and indicated they were available most Monday nights. It was suggested that local City and State delegation candidates be included.

As a sidenote, there was a discussion about the New Haven Board of Education out-placing 300 kids with disabilities per year. Lena indicated from her experience that she is seeing a lot of parents who have children over 18 who do not have information about the continuing education rights of their children.

VII. Adjourn – Tricia made a motion to adjourn, and Grisel seconded. Unanimously passed. The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 PM.