

Commission on Disabilities - Meeting Minutes

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

August 14, 2023, 6:00PM – 7:30 PM

- Present:** Sally Esposito, Billy Huang, Linda McDonough, Tricia Palluzzi, Ben Bond, Sandy Roberts, Carmen Correa-Rios,
- Absent:** Grisel Aquilar-Cobos, Annie Harper
- Staff:** Gretchen Knauff
- Guests:** Valerie Fletcher - Executive Director, Institute for Human Centered Design, Oce Harrison – Project Director, New England ADA Center, Kiomary Sotillo – Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center, Misty Maza

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair B. Huang at 6:08 PM

II. Approval of July 10, 2023, Minutes – Moved to the end of the meeting in deference to the guests who were present and giving the Commission their time. There was no objection.

Note: The minutes were later tabled until the next meeting due to the length of time with our guests.

II. Introductions

The members of the Commission and guests introduced themselves. Billy Huang described the Commission and it's charge for the City of New Haven. He included the current work being done on the proposed elevator ordinance. Valerie Fletcher at the Institute for Human Centered Design mentioned that Rex Pace at HUD would be interested in the work being done on the elevator legislation.

Valerie Fletcher and Oce Harrison introduced themselves. Valerie is the Executive Director of the Institute for Human Centered Design in Boston. IHCD is committed to advancing the role of design in expanding opportunity and enhancing experience for people of all ages, abilities, and cultures through excellence in design. More information on all the ways that IHCD is living its mission is available on their website: <https://www.humancentereddesign.org/>

Oce Harrison is the Project Director of the New England ADA Center (NEADA) which is a program/project of IHCD. The Center is one of ten national centers providing information, guidance, and training on the Americans with Disabilities Act. More information about the Center is available at: <https://www.newenglandada.org/>

Valerie and Oce then moved into talking about a couple of exciting IHCD/ADA projects that affect people with disabilities in New Haven.

Research Project - Oce Harrison talked about the new research project she is directing for the NEADA Center.

In 2020, NEADA published a paper and documentary film, **Changing Reality of Disability in America**, for the 30th anniversary of the ADA. The project addresses the role of inequity and racism in relation to disability. It is also the basis for the new 5-year research project to engage people of color with disabilities with the ADA and ADA services by:

- Using a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach to survey and interview methods.
- Employing grassroots community researchers from six majority cities: two in MA, two in RI, and two cities in CT [New Haven + Bridgeport]
- Trusting that the people who are most impacted by the problem are in the best position to try and solve the problem.

The survey is short – only a few questions and participants will receive a stipend.

The NEADA Center is interested in working with the Commission on connecting with organizations that might lead to finding people who would be willing to be surveyors who would be trusted by members of the community.

More information is available in the slides shared by Oce and attached to these minutes.

The Commission asked if the NEADA would like to have a community conversation with leaders in various communities. They were very interested and will get back to the Commission.

Peabody Museum – Valerie reported on work being done with the Peabody Museum at Yale. Valerie described IHCD's work at the Peabody. They are working to create an environment that is universally inclusive and not just the minimum to meet the requirements of the ADA. One example is encouraging the museum to have audio description throughout the museum. Another is creating resting spaces.

The Commission members asked if they might be able to assist with user experience. Valerie was happy that the Commission members were interested and was going to inquire about having any available members of the Commission do a tour and provide feedback. Sally and Gretchen let Valerie know that they are going to look at the parking situation in front of the museum.

Valerie and Oce will get back to Gretchen with updated information about the projects and how the Commission can assist.

III. OLD Business

The items under Old Business were tabled due to the length of the discussion with our guests.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:50pm.