

## **Commission on Disabilities - Meeting Minutes**

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

**July 10, 2023, 6:00PM – 7:30 PM**

**Present:** Tricia Palluzzi, Annie Harper, Sally Esposito, Carmen Correa-Rios, Grisel Aguilar, Sandra Roberts, Billy Huang, Ben Bond, Linda McDonough (came in at end)

**Absent:** None

**Staff:** Gretchen Knauff

**Guests:** Ira Hafer (New Haven Symphony), Lena Esposito – CT Family Support Network, Brittny Bettis-Allen - Operation Fuel, Matthew Di Vitto – Yale School of Public Health, Kiomary Sotillo (Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center)

### **I. Call to Order**

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

**II. Revision of the Agenda** – The members of the Commission voted unanimously to revise the agenda to include a discussion with the Yale led team doing research on Medical Devices and Climate Resilience.

### **III. Introductions**

The members of the Commission and guests introduced themselves.

### **IV. Approval of June 12, 2023 minutes.**

The Commission members approved the minutes from the June 12, 2023 meeting.

### **V. Medical Devices and Climate Resilience Research**

A. Harper, M. Di Vitto, and B. Bettis-Allen shared their research into medical devices and climate resilience. L. Esposito asked whether parents of children with medical devices were eligible to participate – they are. S. Roberts shared her experience of being fearful of losing electricity as an electric wheelchair user living in a multi-family building. C. Correa-Rios suggested that the Center for Disability Rights could facilitate a focus group for the study, they can find people. A. Harper will share the flyer. G. Knauff suggested that the information be shared with all five Centers for Independent Living across the state. Commission members emphasized the importance of practical recommendations, and of sharing the results across stakeholders.

**VI. Effective Communication Update** - A. Harper gave an update – hasn't heard back from the letter writing group about a date to meet with the Mayor. L. Esposito – has group of people who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing who may want to attend. B. Huang will contact the Mayor to get some possible dates on his calendar in the next 2.5 months.

While discussing the meeting with the Mayor, the issue of access to the East Rock Summit was discussed. The road is currently closed to vehicles except for Sundays. Individuals may use the

road to bike or walk when the park is open. The limitation for vehicles creates a barrier for people with disabilities. S. Esposito – we could share this with the Mayor, if we can get a meeting with him about effective communication.

**VII. Commissioner Highlight – Tricia Palluzzi** – Tricia has been an architect since 1998 working on projects such as long-term care facilities, federally funded health facilities, and affordable housing. Most of her clients have been nonprofits. Tricia has a son with Autism who attends Amity High School. They are currently starting to think about transition and what comes after he ages out of the school system at 22. Elaine Quinn, a previous Commissioner encouraged Tricia to join the Commission many years ago!

### **VIII. Old Business**

- A. Elevator Ordinance** – Gretchen reported that the elevator subgroup is waiting for a meeting with LCI since they would be the enforcement entity for the proposed ordinance.
- B. Notification for Individuals with Autism** - No significant updates
- C. The Big Read** - S. Esposito. The Big Read planning group will be meeting to debrief about the various events and activities. The group will then meet with festival organizers to give feedback to make sure that it is more accessible in the future. Saw some lost opportunities to integrate conversations about disability justice with broader social justice issues. Also need to work to make Arts community that is integral part of New Haven more authentically open to people with disabilities. There seemed to be interest from doing people and organizations in making the arts more accessible.

### **IX. New Business**

- A. Strong School Development** - S. Esposito and Gretchen met with developers of the Strong School in Fair Haven; they are committed to inclusion. Considering suggesting that developer ask for letter of support from Commission to ensure that right balance is struck between preservation and accessibility.
- B. Legislative Forum**  
B. Huang – suggests that we have legislative forum to be able to engage legislators on disability related issues. Include both municipal and state legislators. Also suggests that we do legislative training to learn how process works, how to write testimony etc. Possible issues – Husky C, Benefits cliff. B. Huang will follow up to create list of subjects.

### **X. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:50pm.