

# **Commission on Disabilities - Meeting Minutes**

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

**Jan 8, 2024**

**Present:** Tricia Palluzzi, Annie Harper, Sally Esposito, Billy Huang, Ben Bond, Sandra Roberts, Carmen Correa-Rios, Lina Esposito, Grisel Aguilar-Cobos

**Absent:** Linda McDonough

**Staff:** Gretchen Knauff

**Guests:** David Agosta, Bobby Berriault

## **I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Chair B. Huang at 6:12 PM.

## **II. Welcome guests**

B. Berriault introduced himself as a person with autism and expressed interest in joining the commission. Bobby has already applied and is waiting to go through the Alders process. B. Huang thanked D. Agosta for his regular participation.

## **III. Approval of December 11, 2023, minutes.**

B. Huang made a motion to accept the minutes and S. Esposito seconded. G. Aguilar abstained.

## **IV. Old Business**

### **A. Elevator Ordinance – summary document**

The group reviewed and discussed the one pager that G. Knauff, L. Esposito, C. Correa-Rios and L. McDonough prepared. It will be translated in Spanish. S. Esposito suggested stating up front who the one-pager is targeting (tenants? Building managers?). Also edit as needed so it can be used as a press release. G. Knauff will contact the communications office again and ask for a press release. B. Huang suggested explaining the Knox box and clarifying next steps for tenants. The group discussed whether to add language about voting rights (suggested by D. Agosta) and about their rights in non-emergency situations (G. Knauff). G. Aguilar expressed her concern that City staff often do not know the content of new ordinances. How can we support raising awareness about this? The group also discussed whether there is a need to simplify the information so that tenants know what to do when they experience an elevator outage. L. Esposito noted that outreach is needed to get the information out to Spanish speakers, especially people with disabilities. She is frustrated by the many barriers in the way of these groups when they have complaints, such as getting help completing forms. Agencies that are supposed to help don't always fulfil their ADA requirements in getting help for people with disabilities in these situations. G. Knauff suggested that she, L. Esposito, and C. Correa-Rios discuss this offline, and they agreed. The group reviewed the chart that we created in an earlier meeting listing which commission members should contact which group to get the word out – G. Knauff suggested adding Legal Aid. A. Harper suggested communicating this to the Green Bank/Clean Energy group who are working on developing codes for buildings to provide back-up power/support to

Home Medical Device users, as the issue of non-working elevators has come up frequently in that project. B. Huang said they have asked him to be on the advisory board. Steve Winter was also added to the list, and the Housing mediation group at court.

### **B. Notification System for Individuals with Autism**

G. Knauff, this is moving ahead, slowly but surely. T. Palluzzi – when it is in place, it will be important for the commission to support efforts to get the word out. In conjunction with the Walk with Derek forms, other municipalities have a “meet the police” day where families can meet officers, go the police station, see a police car, etc.

### **C. Legislative Forum**

G. Knauff – This training will take place on Jan 24<sup>th</sup> at 6-7pm. She will send out a flyer tomorrow to share. It will be recorded and posted on the Disability Commission website.

### **D. Effective Communication**

G. Knauff has no updates. Has been running into dead ends. City only has one interpreter service as a vendor, and it is challenging to include new vendors. She would prefer that the city hire an interpreter. Chicago has four full-time interpreters. S. Esposito read news story today about declining quality of interpreter services in the state. Perhaps we need to push at state level. Also, she watched the mayor’s inauguration speech on YouTube, and while there was an interpreter their hands were not visible.

### **E. Long-Wharf**

S. Esposito – we have meetings scheduled so will be able to share more next meeting.

### **F. David Agosta concerns about ADA violations across the city.**

David Agosta sent a group of various accessibility related documents related to the city. B. Huang suggests creating a sub-committee to focus on these issues. D. Agosta noted in the chat “have a list of requests that I’d like the commission to consider and put on its agenda. It’s all Title II compliance stuff. It starts with the Commission being excluded from the Safe Routes for All planning. There are indications of intent to discriminate and some unpleasant ethnic demographic data”. He shared a google folder with evidence of these violations - [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1M1XGiC8Ay\\_FktT8pyNCIfY0T-oC1hUOb](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1M1XGiC8Ay_FktT8pyNCIfY0T-oC1hUOb). He summarized some of those findings, including that wealthy/white neighborhoods/schools have fewer ADA violations, and when there are violations, they are addressed more quickly. B. Huang made a motion to create a sub-committee, S. Esposito seconded this. T. Palluzzi said she would review the cases and assess which are already in code (so are violations) and which may need new codes, and what is low hanging fruit. G. Knauff will participate. A. Harper suggested considering whether Yale departments (e.g., Architecture, Law school) may have students/clinic classes that could be helpful. B. Huang will follow up.

## **VI. New Business**

### **A. Special Education for refugee children**

G. Aguilar raised the issue of refugee children, particularly those who speak Pushto, being denied special education services due to being ‘foreign’. T. Palluzzi said she had similar experiences with her son, she will talk with G. Aguilar. G. Knauff suggested making a formal complaint to the State Department of Education as their rights are being violated.

**B. City Plan Meeting – Vision 2035 Launch, 5:30pm Thurs 1/11/24**

G. Knauff encouraged members to attend to draw attention to disability issues. She will send the flyer to everyone. Some of the members agreed to be there to have a resource table from 5:30 PM to 6:15 PM. The plan will be launched at 6:15 PM. The public is welcome to watch virtually.

**IX. Adjourn.**

B. Huang made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and C. Correa-Rios seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 8:01pm.