

Commission on Disabilities - Meeting Minutes

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Feb 12, 2024

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

Absent: None

Staff: Gretchen Knauff

Guests: John Truscinski (CIRCA)

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair B. Huang at 6:07 PM.

II. Approval of January 8, 2024, minutes.

B. Huang made a motion to accept the minutes and S. Esposito seconded. Minutes unanimously approved with one abstention - G. Aguilar-Cobos

III. J. Truscinski from CIRCA

S. Esposito introduced J. Truscinski from the CT Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation (CIRCA); she met him at a meeting of the Fair Haven management team where she emphasized the importance of planning for disability inclusion at the earliest stage of planning and design. J. Truscinski explained that CIRCA was created after Hurricane Sandy to bring together researchers around climate change resilience. They have been focused on flooding. CIRCA has a HUD funded project called Resilient Connecticut focusing on New Haven and Fairfield counties, goal is to development regional action plan. CIRCA has worked with various City Departments - Emergency Operations - Rick Fontana, City Plan – Laura Brown, Engineering – Giovanni Zinn, Sustainability – Steven Winter. The focus is on Fair Haven given high vulnerability to flood and heat risks. They are developing the idea of ‘resilience hubs’ where people can go before, during and after a flood event to get resources, assistance – possibly with power provided via microgrids. In Fair Haven, they have proposed 3 resilience hubs, and 5 cooling centers. S. Esposito – what transportation may be available to help people get to the locations – Mary Wade home may be able to provide buses – should be part of the planning. J. Truscinski explained that they are keen to get such feedback at this point. Also want to offer guidance – e.g. residents along Front St. have long dealt with flooding and haven’t had luck getting \$ to make their homes more flood resistant. They are seeking funding from NOAA (proposal due end of day tomorrow!) and are looking to partner with community agencies who could potentially hire staff to help with the planning process, e.g. Junta for Progressive Action. B. Huang – is the state supportive? J. Truscinski – state has signed onto the proposal (Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and Office of Policy and Management). L. Esposito asked about planning for service animals and pets. A. Harper – recommends connecting with the I Heart My Home program (they already have). A. Harper is working with the CT Green Bank on the Climate Resilient Energy Codes/Home Medical Device project – will share findings with J. Truscinski. G. Knauff mentioned the Red Cross systems for developing emergency shelters – their experience may be helpful. S.

Esposito suggests recommending equipped vans to move people around – ask Mary Wade for advice. Also asks whether there are options for people who have solar panels to manage without grid power – T. Palluzzi – need a battery for that, B. Bond mentioned that batteries can be used to keep Home Medical Devices running – should be subsidized for lower-income people. Next steps – if they get funding will start to do the work in October. Will continue to seek funding if they don't get this one.

IV. Old Business

A. Elevator Ordinance –

G. Knauff got feedback from the Fair Rent Commission about the flyer and incorporated their suggestions. Is waiting for others to get back to her. S. Esposito has been looking for update info about management teams, hard to find. Could write to head clerk for housing mediation and share draft. B. Huang - should get it out to media, need a press release, work through alders and police. S. Esposito suggests having a story with a building manager who is willing to post it publicly. A. Harper will ask people at The Towers. S. Esposito – let's invite LCI representative here to discuss this. We need to build relationship with them. S. Esposito – could get a flyer in the tax bills in July. G. Knauff – all tenants should have been informed already. The ordinance went into effect in December 2023. Information must be posted by elevators in all residential buildings with elevators.

B. Notification System for Individuals with Autism

Time to help get the word out. S. Esposito – program is up and running as far as she knows but police are very stretched, may not have time to participate in a press conference. Gretchen will connect with the NHPD about details of the program and possible press release.

C. Legislative Forum

B. Huang – M. Cole did great job, but what's next? Get input from K. Flaherty/the State Independent Living Council (SILC)? G. Knauff – there are regular Legislative Policy calls on Fridays at noon – she can share Commissioner emails, so everyone receives an invite to the meetings. B. Huang – this is a short session, let's get some stuff done.

D. Effective Communication

G. Knauff has no updates. Is not confident that anything can be built into the budget. The ADA doesn't include a proactive enforcement unit and is more complaint driven. A. Harper, asked for examples in other municipalities. G. Knauff – spoke with the Mayor's Commission in Chicago – they have four interpreters on staff. It's a much larger city, but the information could be used to inform New Haven.

E. Long Wharf

S. Esposito is continuing to meet with representatives of Long Wharf to discuss incorporating disability into their planning. Had a meeting scheduled for tomorrow but it is postponed due to the snow. She will continue to work on it.

V. New Business

A. East Rock Policy Review Request

The Commission received a request from David Agosta to review the East Rock Policy of closing the vehicle access road that leads to the top. Closing the road eliminates the ability of some people with disabilities from being able to access the top. Members of the

Commission discussed possible solutions such as an accessible golf cart. The discussion was tabled due to the late hour.

Billy, Tricia, and Gretchen agreed to review the documents submitted by David Agosta. They will meet on March 9, 2024, at 8:00 AM

VI. Public Comment – None

VIII. Adjourn

B. Huang made a motion to adjourn the meeting. T. Palluzzi seconded. Unanimous vote to adjourn the meeting at 8:11 PM.