

Commission on Disabilities Meeting

May 13, 2024 – via Zoom

6:00 PM

Present: Billy Huang, Trisha Paluzzi, Ben Bond, Lena Esposito

Absent: Annie Harper, Carmen Correa-Rios, Bobby Barriault

Guest: Chris Blake

I. Call to Order – The meeting was called to order at 6:17 PM

II. Minutes – The minutes were tabled until the June 2024 meeting.

III. 2024 Legislation Affecting People Disabilities – The Connecticut Legislative Session ended on May 8, 2024. Gretchen reviewed a few pieces of legislation that passed both houses of the Legislature and are waiting for the Governor's signature.

- 1. HB 5523 (Section 65) – BUREAU of SERVICES for PERSONS WHO ARE DEAF DEAF-BLIND or HARD OF HEARING** – This bill establishes a Bureau of Services for Persons Who Are Deaf, Deafblind or Hard of Hearing within the Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS).

The legislation directs ADS to hire an Executive Director, provide counseling, interpreting and other assistance to persons who are deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing (except for federally funded vocational rehabilitation employees) and assist with registering interpreters for the deaf. The Bureau would also work with agencies to ensure appointment of a designated employee for each state agency to assist people who are deaf, deaf-blind or heard of hearing. The Bureau would provide information and resources, training, public awareness coordination, assistance to interpreting agencies and improve services on TV stations.

- 2. HB 5200 – AAC HEALTH CARE ACCESSIBILITY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES** – This bill requires certain medical offices to have accessible medical diagnostic equipment.

The bill defines "Medical diagnostic equipment" as (A) an examination table, (B) an examination chair, (C) a weight scale, (D) mammography 12 equipment, and (E) x-ray, imaging and other radiological diagnostic 13 equipment

It requires, by January 1, 2025, certain medical providers must inventory of all accessible and inaccessible medical diagnostic equipment and an action plan to update it. By January 1, 2026, any facility with three exam rooms or more shall have at least one exam room that is accessible to persons with disabilities (Exam table/chair) and weight scale.

3. **SB 308 - AN ACT IMPLEMENTING TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WHEELCHAIR REPAIR** – This bill is an amazing benefit for people with disabilities as it requires timely wheelchair repair.

Under the bill, "Timely repair" means as soon as practicable but not later than ten (10) calendar days after the date of request for repair from a consumer provided the consumer makes the wheelchair available and any prior approval required from an insurer has been acquired.

The bill also requires the companies to repair at the consumer's home upon request. They must have a phone number that accepts messages and sufficient parts on hand to repair.

A major change discontinues the requirement for pre-authorization by Medicaid and private insurers if the current authorization is less than 5 years old. This will result in much faster repairs and maintenance.

IV. Old Business

A. Elevator Ordinance – Tricia reported that she and Annie attended the downtown Worcester Square CMT meeting and talked about the elevator ordinance. She indicated that the group was receptive but wanted to know if the fines could be increased. Gretchen explained during the meeting that \$250 was the maximum allowed by state statute at this time. Tricia offered to attend additional CMT meetings to discuss the elevator ordinance.

B. Notification System for Individuals with Autism – The Walk with Derek program is finally launched!!! There was a press release and a news story on NBC 30. The Walk with Derek form can be found on the NHPD page of the website, the Disability Services Page and is also on the front page of the New Haven website. When it is completed, a Walk with Derek form is automatically sent to the 911 Call Center for Inclusion in the dispatch information for the reported address. The police officers in New Haven are wearing Walk with Derek patches on their uniforms and the NHPD is buying sensory kits for officers to use when they interact with someone who has autism.

C. Effective Communication – The Commissioners discussed how HB 5523 will affect municipalities. Gretchen thought that it would be beneficial for the new Bureau to develop guidelines that could be used by municipalities to assist in providing effective communication. As part of the discussion, Lena asked about who hires the ADA Coordinator and Gretchen let her know that under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities, state and local governments are required to have an employee designated as the ADA coordinator for the organization if they have 50 or more employees.

D. East Rock and Submission of Documents - There was no response to the Commission on Disabilities request for information from engineering, parks in public works regarding Mr. Agosta's complaint. Billy Huang indicated that he will send a follow up email.

E. Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Legislation - Gretchen reported that she's continuing to work on the ADU legislation. When the City Plan Department proposed revisions to the current ADU ordinance, Gretchen requested that a provision be included that requires all ground level ADUs, whether conversions or new buildings, be required to meet the Type B accessibility requirements of the Connecticut State Building Code. At this point, the Alders' Legislation Committee is more concerned about other aspects of the bill, but Gretchen is following along to ensure that any questions regarding accessibility provision can be addressed. She will continue to monitor the progress.

V. Business

A. Finding Commission Members – The members present were asked to think about others in New Haven of various disabilities and races who would be good members for the Commission on Disabilities. Gretchen will be talking with a potential Commission member on Tuesday (5/14).

B. Gathering – Billy will send out an email concerning a summer gathering to the members of the Commission since the number of members still present at the end of the meeting had dwindled.

C. Public Comment - There was no public comment. Mr. Blake, who attended the entire meeting, was allowed to make comments during the meeting and there was no need for further public comment.

VI. Announcements – There were no announcements.

VII. Adjourn – The meeting was adjourned at 7:21 P.M.