



TONI N. HARP
Mayor

COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES
CITY OF NEW HAVEN
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ROBIN TOUSEY-AYERS
Chairperson

Commission on Disabilities Meeting Minutes

City Hall 4th Floor Conference Room

July 7, 2014

Present: Jenifer Blemings, Tricia Palluzzi, Matthew Ranelli, Maria Rivera, Jack Tsai and Robin Tousey-Ayers

Staff: Michelle Duprey and Paula Pernal

Absent: Iva Long

Guests: Andrea Scott and Mayor Toni N. Harp

Meeting called to order at 5:26 p.m.

Minutes

Robin stated that there are a few changes to the May Minutes and she will provide them to Paula Pernal for editing.

Matt made a motion to accept the May minutes as revised.
Jenifer seconded the motion.

May minutes are approved as revised.

Chairperson's Report

Robin stated that she will ask Mayor Toni N. Harp for an ADA Anniversary Celebration proclamation on behalf of the Commission. The 24th anniversary of its signing will be July 26th.

Presentation with Mayor Toni N. Harp (Summary)

Robin discussed the Mission of the Commission on Disabilities

1. Accessibility in New Haven
2. Contributions to Society of Citizens of New Haven with Disabilities

Robin mentioned that the main “ask” at the Commission’s presentation before the Board of Alders in March was increasing membership of the Commission to represent as many districts as possible.

- **Introductions** - An introduction of each Commission member takes Place.
- **Commission on Disabilities** - Robin Tousey-Ayers presents the main focus areas of the Commission.
- **Disability Services** – Michelle Duprey, Esq. presents how the Department of Disability Services fully supports the Commission. She also shared that 26% of New Haven residents have disabilities who have a high unemployment rate in New Haven and should be included in any jobs initiatives.
- **Promoting Universal Accessibility** – Matthew Ranelli presented the issue of elevators in high rise buildings. Individuals with mobility issues are unable to enter or exit these buildings because elevators are broken, out of service or not ADA compliant. The Commission wants to work with Livable City Initiative (LCI) and the Building Official to provide them with greater authority to enforce violations.

Mayor Harp stated that City of New Haven fire trucks are unable to evacuate people in buildings which are over 12 floors. Patricia Palluzzi stated that buildings should have an area of refuge/rescue that is identified in their safety plans presented to the fire department.

Discussion ensued that this will be an excellent issue to address with the City of New Haven Chief of the Fire Department. It may require changing state regulations.

- **School Climate** – Patricia Palluzzi presented on the importance of training for teachers and paraprofessionals in special education; the importance of structure and trust; the need for implementation of newer technology; training about bullying for children with disabilities. She stressed that children with disabilities must become productive members of society.

No formal Special Education PTO exists in New Haven.

Mayor Harp stated that she is on the Board of Education and Sal DeCola is a good resource.

- **Mental Health Gaps and Safety Nets** – Robin Tousey-Ayers and Jack Tsai presented on behalf of Iva Long who was unable to be present. Issues include: aging out of the school system without a Transition Individual Education Plan; expansion of The Affordable Care Act which might be a possible solution although clinicians are reluctant to accept their reimbursement rates.

Mayor Harp stated that she is not aware of another system other than Connecticut Mental Health Center (CMHC).

Another issue that has arisen is housing children adults in emergency room and short term stay psychiatric units. Mayor Harp stated that there was a way through Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) – Young Adult Services (YAS) to help young adults transition successfully from the Dept. of Children & Families (DCF) to the adult mental health system and to achieve the necessary skills for adulthood. Unfortunately it is almost impossible to get into this program.

- **Equal Employment for Persons with Disabilities** – Jenifer Blemings presented information from the U.S. Census Bureau Reports - 1 in 5 individuals have a disability and that New Haven has higher statistics. The population of disabilities account for the largest number of people living in poverty in the U.S. and that 80% of people with disabilities are unemployed.

Benefits of employment include not only income, but also purpose in life. Individuals with Disabilities may require reasonable accommodations that may cost as little as \$600.

There are Six Broad Disability Categories:

1. Deaf or Serious Hearing Impairment
2. Blindness or Serious Visual Impairment
3. Physical Impairment related to physical, mental or emotional condition affecting concentration or memory
4. Difficulty climbing stairs or walking
5. Difficulty with self-care, dressing and/or bathing
6. Decreased ability to function independently related to a physical, mental or emotional condition

Individuals with disabilities are often thought to have a mental or emotional impairment. Individuals with invisible disabilities are often thought as faking it. Both are not true.

Mayor Harp shares a personal story with the Commission affirming her familiarity with the importance of work in a person's life.

- **Inclusion of Veterans with Disabilities** – Jack Tsai presents on the importance of considering veterans with disabilities when it comes to jobs. They are Heroes - inspirational, success stories for children. Veteran speakers before School Children are well received-good resource.
- **Broadening the Membership of the Commission** – Maria Rivera asked Mayor Harp for recommendations for new members for the Commission.

Robin stated that the Commission has made numerous efforts in the area of the Arts for individuals with disabilities and provided examples. Michelle stated that the Commission would like to participate in an event at the Arts & Ideas next year for the 25th Anniversary of the ADA.

Mayor Harp thanked Michelle Duprey for all of her work and the continued work of the Commission.

Mayor Harp stated that she would like to work with Commission on one of her objectives: Jobs for New Haven residents. Mayor Harp stated that the fact that so many residents have disabilities means that she has to deal with that population. She will raise this issue with New Haven Works on how they support people with disabilities and get them jobs.

Mayor Harp mentioned that she met with HUD and promised to work with them to eliminate homelessness for people with disabilities-100 days to house 100 people.

Mayor Harp stated that she has been working with a program for Veterans and wants to expand this program because she has found that it has made a real difference in their lives.

Mayor Harp stated that elevators and high rises is more a safety issue. Michelle stated that she will be happy to organize a meeting with all parties. Mayor Toni N. Harp will ask her new Fire Chief about this issue. Patricia mentioned that service contracts are the easiest contracts to obtain. Mayor Toni N. Harp suggested drafting new legislation.

Mayor Harp mentioned that her three areas of concentration are: education for all children, safe streets and jobs for all New Haven residents.

To contact Mayor Harp: tharp@newhavenct.net

Department Report

None.

Old Business

None.

New Business

None.

Other Business

None.

Public Comment/Announcements

None.

Robin made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Jack seconded the motion.

Motion to adjourn the meeting was approved unanimously at 6:41 p.m.