



**JOHN DeSTEFANO, JR.**  
*Mayor*

**COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES**  
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**DAVID HICKS**  
*Chairperson*

**Commission on Disabilities Minutes**  
**October 17, 2011**

Present: Cecile Brodsky, Dana Canevari, David Hicks, William Long, Elaine Quinn, Matthew Ranelli, Jack Tsai

Excused Absence: Jason Gomez

Staff: Michelle Duprey, Paula Pernal

Meeting was called to order at 5:20 p.m.

**July Minutes**

David suggests that members review September minutes.

David directs a protocol question to Michelle concerning the Elections and the Secretary of the Commission.

Elaine made a motion to accept the September minutes in its current form.

September minutes approved unanimously with no changes.

**Chairman's Report**

David speaks about the event on September 26, 2011 with Metro Taxi concerning the implementation of new accessible taxi cabs. David discusses about the long awaited redesign phase of the two taxi cabs. He states that they are coupled with the compressed natural gas (CNG) filling station at Metro Taxi. David commends Michelle as one of the many guest speakers. David mentions that the event was well attended with such guest speakers such as: Rosa DeLauro; William Picard, Mayor of West Haven; and Richard Blumenthal. David asks Michelle if there are an additional 70 taxi cabs to be designed. Michelle responds that this is based upon the approval of the State. Michelle states that January 31, 2012 is the deadline in which all the vehicles must be on the road. She mentions that the permits and documents must be in place prior to that date. Bill asks if permits translate to medallions. Michelle responds in the affirmative. Michelle states that if all the approvals are not received, then the vehicles will be CNG vehicles. David mentions that he rode in the new accessible taxi. David says that there are 3 Pre-MV1 vehicles. Michelle states that two are not registered.

**Guest Speaker**

Amy Meek, Coordinator of Reentry Initiative

Mission: Work with State Agencies, Organizations and Community Partners to Assist with Individuals Returning from Incarceration

25 Released Each Week and growing into City

Over 300 Released Last Year into City

Amy read that 10% of incarcerated individuals have disabilities.

Michelle mentions that she is reading that in 2001 it was 12.3%

1. Work with Individuals who have been Incarcerated or that have a Past Conviction by providing services in areas:
  - a. Identification
  - b. Job Search
  - c. Referrals to Housing Assistance (subsidized housing for individuals with criminal record-100 people on waiting list at Housing Authority)
  - d. Referrals for Healthcare (to Community Health Van & Transitions Clinic)
  - e. Outreach Work (ZOAR)-work with Columbus House & individuals applying for disability income
  - f. Advocacy
2. Policy Issues
  - a. Ban The Box
  - b. Collateral Consequences
3. Community Partners to Organize Events
  - a. Give funds to area Programs from Grant
  - b. Round Table (Community Meetings)

Amy states that there is a huge demand for subsidized housing. She mentions that her department handles a lot of referrals for housing assistance. Amy states that HUD requires a criminal background check when applying to the Housing Authority or other privately owned subsidized housing. There is a lot of latitude in the decision-making process when considering applicants. Amy states that the only requirements for those individuals that they must deny are those individuals that are lifetime-registered sex offenders and individuals who have been convicted of producing methamphetamine drugs. Amy mentions that she has seen many individuals that were denied for any and all felonies no matter how old the conviction. She states that her department works with individuals on the appeals.

David asks why Social Security denies individuals on the first application. Many commissioners state this occurs for everyone. Dana discusses her personal experiences with the Social Security Administration. Elaine states that she believes that the philosophy is that if Social Security denies the claim and you come back then it truly is a legitimate claim. David states that it has a negative effect on the community. Michelle states that average application for determination typically takes 15 months.

Bill, Michelle & David all agree that the 10% disability statistic mentioned by Amy may be low. David states that it may be just for the community.

Michelle asks Elaine about the PBS television special about incarceration and mental illness and the lack of healthcare. Elaine states that once they closed the large mental hospitals, for example Norwich, the funds from the closure of this institution was supposed to be used for individuals to be serviced within the community. Elaine states that this did not happen. She mentions that many mentally ill individuals in prison had minor crimes such as disturbing the peace. Elaine states that the prisons have become the mental hospitals and of course the prisoners are not getting the appropriate services or medications. She further states that it is often the cognitive abilities that are impaired. Amy agrees that the percentage of individuals with mental illness is a lot higher than 10%. Amy states that her department has seen a lot of individuals with mental illness and substance abuse issues.

Amy discusses in detail that her department works with individuals who are applying or re-applying for disability income.

Bill asks Amy about Liberty House as compared to others in the City. Amy states that they have been responsive.

Bill asks Amy about the success rate with respect to public housing. Amy states that she and her staff person use the Housing Resource Guide on the Disability Services web page. Bill asks acceptance of incarcerate individuals. Amy responds that New Haven is better than most cities and states. Amy states

that Connecticut is lenient. She mentions that the one restriction in this area is that the probation officer has a lot of latitude to decide where an individual can or cannot live. Amy states that typically there is a 6 month to 2 year waiting year list for housing.

Elaine mentions that housing is in short supply. Elaine asks if New Haven receives individuals from other communities. Amy responds in the affirmative.

Elaine states that she has reviewed the Reentry website and noticed the "Round Table". Amy states that the "Round Table" is a community organizing component comprised of many agencies and individuals that meet at the Church on The Rock at 95 Hamilton Street on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of every month at 10:00 a.m. Amy states that it is a "loose collaborative" that identifies gaps and shares resources. Amy mentions that there is a Housing Committee, Chronic Homeless Committee, Faith-Based Committee, and Community Perspective Committee.

Jack asks Amy about what areas are in need. Amy states that the areas in need are outreach (applying for disability) and job placement/employment (losing current income).

David asks Amy who assists individuals with filling out forms for Social Security benefits. Amy suggests that more training in this area is needed.

Michelle suggests the Intake Portal at CHOICES Program for Healthcare benefits (Medicare & Medicaid).

Amy states that she regularly updates the City's Resource Guide that is online. She suggests that the Disability Commission think about what resources overlap for individuals with disabilities and individuals that have been incarcerated. Michelle states that the Commission should review its Resource Guide.

David asks about follow-up with individuals. Amy states that she has used interns, but without permanent housing it has been difficult because the information given is no longer valid.

David asks Amy about distributing forms to individuals. Amy responds that most of their clients already have too many documents to keep track especially since their housing is not stable.

Elaine asks Amy about original scope of services of Department. Amy states that it probably was originally designed to be more policy and community organizing in nature.

Elaine asks if Yale is involved. Amy discusses her experiences with working with are clinics at the Yale Law School.

Elaine asks Amy about length of sentences. Amy states that it is a broad spectrum.

David suggests that everyone think about the areas discussed by the Guest Speaker, Amy Meek and how the Commission may assist the City's Reentry Initiative.

Elaine suggests that many attend the "Round Table" meetings.

### **Department Report**

Michelle has no report.

Michelle states that David already spoke about the importance of the accessible Taxi.

Michelle stated that individuals are needed to serve on the Nominating Committee to serve as Officers.

### **Old Business**

David volunteers to be on the Nominating Committee.

Dana volunteers to be on the Nominating Committee.

Elaine asks about the term dates. Michelle states that she believes the term renewals are in February.

Michelle says that she will check with Patti Lawlor in the Mayor's Office and get back to the Commission.

Michelle would like to suggest that Robin be re-appointed to the Commission.

### **New Business**

None

### **Other Business**

None

### **Public Comment/Announcements**

Elaine informed everyone that effective in November, there is Family Support Group Meeting every 1st Thursday of every month at the Thomas Golden Center on Park Street between 7:00-8:30 p.m. for families with individuals that have mental disabilities.

Michelle states that Phyllis Zlotnick, a long-time disability advocate and lobbyist, passed away this weekend. Michelle mentions that you would like more information about her advocacy history or the services; please feel free to contact her office for a copy of the email from PNA.

David made motion to adjourn meeting.

Bill seconded the motion.

Motion to adjourn approved unanimously at 6:55 p.m.