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BILLY HUANG
Chairperson

Commission on Disabilities - Meeting Minutes

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

July 12, 2021, 6:00 – 7:30 pm

- Present:** Billy Huang, Tricia Palluzzi, Grisel Aguilar, Annie Harper, Sally Esposito, Arya Singh, Robin Tousey-Ayers
- Staff:** Gretchen Knauff
- Absent:** None
- Guests:** Justin McCarthy and Terence Rountree, New Haven Fire Department, Linda McDonough

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Billy Huang at 6:05 pm at which time a quorum was present.

II. Guest Speakers – Justin McCarthy and Terence Rountree, New Haven Fire Department

B. Huang introduces the elevator issue - 2016 ordinance considered it to be discriminatory if residential elevators were not properly repaired within 72 hours unless alternative accessible housing provided. Question is, is the ordinance effective?

J. McCarthy – we respond to elevator emergencies from ‘suppression side’ (emergency response) if person is stuck in elevator, or other emergencies. Marshall’s office does inspections, compliance etc. with regard to fire issues. If work is to be done on elevators, Marshall works with building department – permitting and inspection – to make sure that elevators operate in case of fire etc. Certificates of operation come from a separate division. Records show there have been 62 calls for service since Jan 1st (similar to previous years). If someone is stuck, they shut down the elevator power and bring out the person. The elevator cannot be turned on until any repairs have been done – is tagged. Contractor then verifies if it is repaired, call is made to Fire Marshall’s office that records those repairs have been made. S. Esposito asks for clarity about records. If a building inspector goes out and finds an elevator issue, are you informed? J. McCarthy – only about fire-related issues. Remodeling and installing of elevator would involve fire Marshall, but any issues that aren’t fire related would not come to them. B. Huang – are elevators repaired in timely fashion? Are there any locations where problems happen repeatedly? J. McCarthy – we do see repeats, but for the most part these are minor issues that are quickly rectified. L. McDonough – is there plan to evacuate people with disabilities, including mental health? T. Rountree – can preplan, know where disabled people live in the building. Protect people in place if need be. We have enough staff to care for someone in distress. T. Palluzzi – are buildings required to submit fire evacuation plan to the city? T. Rountree – plans are submitted to the Fire Marshall’s office. B. Huang – if a building’s only elevator is out for a while, who is notified? J. McCarthy – we do our best when we’re aware of something.

Describes recent situation where fire caused elevators to be down for a while. i) We implement a fire watch – identify a person who can contact 911 in case of fire, ii) work with residents to evacuate or keep safe in place iii) work with the hospital/LCI/RedCross to accommodate anyone who cannot stay in their apartment. If not fire-related, it doesn't go to us – we sometimes find out other ways, eg if they go to a building for a medical emergency and find elevators are out. Most situations we mitigate as it comes.

S. Esposito – we are also concerned with poor maintenance etc. which doesn't go to fire department. Given this, who should be the enforcement entity for the ordinance? Currently is in commission of equal opportunities (CEO) because concerns discrimination against people with disabilities. We're revisiting that – could it be somewhere else? J. McCarthy – LCI may be right place. B. Huang – what is network of services, who interacts at what stage of an emergency? When does hand off to other services (medical, social, housing) happen if people can't get into their apartments due to broken elevator? J. McCarthy – we allow 'reasonable' amount of time to get elevators up and running. Done on case-by-case basis – large building with no working elevator more serious. We refer to the ordinance if we need to push things, get the wheels moving. LCI has more teeth as far as being able to relocate someone. B. Huang – do we need better enforcement of this ordinance? T. Rountree – cost is another issue – it can be very costly to get repairs done. With older buildings, do we keep putting band aid on it, can we afford upgrade? But, mostly when we say elevators need to be serviced, it does get done.

Conversation about sharing information about residents with medical needs. T. Rountree – we get informed about people's medical issues but have to be careful what we share with other agencies because of HIPAA. T. Palluzzi – do you have a working relationship with visiting nurses? Or Elderly services if someone is at risk? J. McCarthy – coordination usually done through Yale Hospital. EMS chief deals with this. R Tousey-Ayers – What if a person refuses transport to hospital? J. McCarthy – we do record this.

B. Huang – what about schools/commercial buildings. J. McCarthy – we don't differentiate. We deal with urgent issues, but we don't go looking for them. We have to be made aware of the issues. Key takeaway – if we don't know, we don't act. B. Huang – who intervenes if someone is simply not repairing an elevator that needs to be repaired. J. McCarthy – this would be LCI. LCI has authority on buildings of 3 apartments or greater that are not owner-occupied. They deal with landlords every single day. They can relocate people, work with the city to potentially recoup costs from landlords through fines/liens. They do this work on a regular basis. LCI does work with the Fire Marshall's office. G

IV. Departmental report

G. Knauff sent note to schools about accommodating children with disabilities for summer programs. They responded that they have no money or supports for children with disabilities. This commission could address this for next year. Works with CT wide group on supported decision making. Has been working on ADA Accommodation requests from employees and in Zoning – trying to make sure that forms are fillable online. Has also surveyed all the polling places in New Haven and wrote a summary of issues for the Registrar of Voters.

V. Other business

S. Esposito – attended meeting on how to spend ARPA funds. Discussion focused mainly on wealth building. Hers was the only table that discussed people with disabilities. Focus was on creating wealth for people who are residents of New Haven. Can G. Knauff find out about the group that was running the meetings? There were 6-7 people from a group she hadn't heard of – her facilitator was from Brooklyn New York. Discussion about how to get ideas about disabilities to the city – A Harper shared website where ideas can be shared <https://www.civicspacenh.com/submit-a-topic>. A. Harper suggests starting a google doc. We then had further discussion on inclusivity of children with disabilities in summer programming, G. Aguilar – children with disabilities have nothing to do this summer. T. Palluzzi – her son qualifies for extended year school (ESY) through July. But nothing to do in August. Need more choices. YMCA said they'd have to send an adult with her child.

G. Knauff – this is illegal. T. Palluzzi - Whose making decisions about the funding? Agreed to work on a google doc with ideas, both to submit to the ARPA process, and to ask the BoE about including children with disabilities in summer programs. T Palluzzi – ask Tiffany Jackson, also talk to Ilene Tracy.

For next meeting (September): minutes will be approved next meeting; invite someone re. access to summer programs for kids with disabilities; follow up on elevator ordinance – LCI needs to be in the room, also building department, and CEO given that they are currently responsible for enforcing. Could also go back to the alders who got the ordinance passed if can't get response from CEO.

V. Adjournment

At 7:51 pm, a motion to adjourn was made by B. Huang and seconded by S. Esposito after which the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Annie Harper