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BILLY HUANG
Chairperson

Commission on Disabilities - Meeting Minutes

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

January 10, 2022, 6:00 – 7:30 pm

- Present:** Billy Huang (Chair), Tricia Palluzzi, Sally Esposito, Annie Harper, Grisel Aguilar, Arya Singh, Linda McDonough
- Staff:** Gretchen Knauff
- Absent:** Nina Silva, Robin Tousey-Ayers
- Guests:** None

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair B. Huang at 6:06 PM.

II. Approval of December 13, 2021 Meeting Minutes

A Quorum was established, and the Commission Members reviewed and approved the minutes from December.

III. Report from Commission Chair

B. Huang reports on work with The Housing Collective, funding for initiatives looking to bridge housing and mental health. Subset of folks who go through homeless system who need mental health care, but not severe enough for Local Mental Health Authority (LMHA) care. How to give them the support they need, via FQHCs (Federally Qualified Health Centers). These clinics offer physical health to Medicaid/Medicare patients, want to explore their capacity to provide mental health services to people triaged by homeless system. Create pipelines for program and data sharing between the homelessness system and the FQHCs. Partners include Community Health Center Association of CT, Cornell Scott, a committed Recovery Support Specialist (RSS) in New Haven, and the Yale University Program for Recovery and Community Health (PRCH) (Maria O’Connell/Leigh Nathan). Solutions – use of flex funds, expand community care teams (CCTs), create community health worker (CHW) positions, create a learning collaborative, develop data-sharing platform. Will focus on how CCTs and CHWs can be helpful. Taking proposals to state Housing Commissioner. A Harper asks how they are learning from LMHAs/DMHAS? B. Huang, following up with DMHAS contacts (Dana Begin, Ellen Econs etc.), spoke with Paul Acker from Advocacy Unlimited last week. S. Esposito – What about Fair Haven Community Health Center? They provide mental health services. And are you getting information from Public Housing agencies? B. Huang – will connect with larger PHAs, would appreciate introduction to Fair Haven Community Health Center. G. Knauff – do you have statewide representation? B. Huang – plan to create targeted pilots – e.g. Bridgeport, New Haven, Hartford, maybe New Britain. G. Knauff - Have you done focus groups with people with mental illness/experience of homelessness? B. Huang –

working with social worker who has personal experience of homelessness. Will also connect with people via Paul Acker. G. Knauff – could find people via K. Flaherty/CLRP. T. Palluzzi – 95% of my work is with FQHCs, mostly in NY. When a person enters FQHC, they are asked re. mental health, housing situation, have robust care management systems. She will connect B. Huang with someone in NY. Definitely connect with Sue Lagarde at Fair Haven. G. Knauff – could also talk to independent living centers.

IV. Report from Disability Services

G. Knauff – there was no response to voting memo, B. Huang sent out reminder. Corp Counsel contacted G. Knauff, said registrars will come in February. S. Esposito – could we go with alders and tour the voting sites and educate them about access issues. T. Palluzzi – how many days in advance are polling stations set up? G. Knauff – usually the day before (schools). Registrars of Voters have had accessibility training. Alders should know – we should get them to use the accessible machines, also have them try entering/voting in a wheelchair. L. McDonough – get political party folks to do the same thing – that is where the Registrars come from. S. Esposito – should do on Election Day when we know the alders will be at the polls. G. Knauff – spent time in Spring educating staff re. accessibility, but we still saw problems. Could we set up a model polling place in city hall? S. Esposito – we've done this without much success. Voting areas are in very different types of spaces – one model arrangement won't explain what is needed at all sites. Could create a video with a couple of examples. A. Harper – find a willing alder who's prepared to use wheelchair/not use hands etc. and have media there. B. Huang – mail the memo out to all the above? A. Harper – need to touch people in multiple ways so that they don't forget. T. Palluzzi – could Jaigantic help us with a video? S. Esposito – approach J. Buster.

Concerned about distribution of masks/testing kits, either stand in line or use car – excluding some people with disabilities. Asked DOH to send email to everyone who got home-bound vaccine, they said they wouldn't be doing deliveries. Has teamed up with Center for Disability Rights, the Independent Living Center that serves New Haven, and they will deliver test kits as needed. Test-kit video had no closed captions. Disability seems like an after-thought. Disability Rights CT and CLRP sent letter to Governor saying that process must be more accessible. S. Esposito – could distribute via alders who may know where people with disabilities live – some of this already happening, should build on it. G. Aguilar – worked with a patient at Cornell Scott about someone in a wheelchair who waited for hours in freezing cold to get tests – there is no ramp at some locations. We are working with CARE/Southern – we/they have staff who could distribute items. G. Knauff – Health Centers could get the test kits if they were able to distribute them. L. McDonough – could also use local Community Management Teams to distribute.

V. Old Business

A. Visit to Jaigantic: S. Esposito - Shelton Industrial park - very interesting, huge warehouse, sets get built as need arises. Main topic of conversation was physical accessibility of site. They are looking to hire HR person, important that the person understand not just letter of ADA, but what community wants to see. Seems that accessibility is important - CEO has been at both meetings. One staff person was concerned that jobs might not be suited to people with disabilities, but most seemed enthusiastic. Also wonders if New Haven may have more restrictions re. what they can and can't do (compared to Shelton). B. Huang – should we work with other commissions as we plan around Jaigantic coming to New Haven? G. Knauff – will contact those who attended visit to follow up. S. Esposito – could follow up to find out when they know the location of the New Haven space.

B. Voting – covered in previous section.

C. Outreach to CT Parent Advocacy Center (CPAC): T. Palluzzi - CPAC did lunchtime Facebook live about transition from 0-3 to public school. Only 5 people but 175 views later

on. This is a good way to get people engaged. Is on New Haven parent advocacy group – they have another meeting next week, will get together with a group of teachers working on similar issues. T. Palluzzi will reach out to CPAC.

D. Elevator Ordinance – Educating Residents with Disabilities: G. Knauff – Need to determine how to educate. Disability Services has a limited budget. T. Palluzzi – Alder S. DeCola let her know that the issue has not yet gone to committee. S. Esposito – should do some education with alders/CMTs. G. Knauff – we have a list of buildings with elevators.

E. Ordinance Language – G. Knauff is still working on updating the language in the Ordinances to make it more respectful to people with disabilities.

VI. Strategic Planning

B. Huang – would be good for us to have defined processes and workflows to help move from ideas to practice. Shares summary of commission work that he and G. Knauff came up with in conversation with M. Cole (Policy, Advocacy, Outreach, Education). Commission to think about creating action pipelines every time something comes to the table. Using Gantt charts, sub-committees. Have boilerplate flyers ready (with commission logo). Presents potential workflow chart to guide our work. Wants commission to be more visible both locally and statewide. G. Knauff – also have process to figure out if it's in our wheelhouse, do we have time, who's responsible – make a workplan for each thing. S. Esposito – we need to be sure to come up with specific action steps for the ideas we discuss. B. Huang will create doodle poll.

VII. New Business

A. Funds for Sign Language Interpreters: G. Knauff requested an additional \$25,000 for her budget to cover the cost of interpreter services. Based on expected number of press conferences. Inauguration recording did not have the required interpretation during the pre-recorded parts. A. Harper – CT Mental Health Center (CMHC) Deaf and Hard of Hearing group are keen to help to put together a memo regarding the need for interpretation services. S. Esposito – does Board of Alders use an interpreter? G. Knauff – no, but we do ask in advance if anyone needs an accommodation. We should be scheduling interpreters then cancelling if no-one requests it.

VIII. Public Comment - None

IX. Adjournment

At 7:40 pm, a motion to adjourn was made by B. Huang and seconded by S. Esposito, after which the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Annie Harper