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BILLY HUANG
Chairperson

Commission on Disabilities - Meeting Minutes

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

September 12, 2022, 6:00 – 7:30 pm

- Present:** Billy Huang (Chair), Tricia Palluzzi, Annie Harper, Sally Esposito, Robin Tousey-Ayers, Linda McDonough, Robin Tousey-Ayres
- Absent:** Nina Silva, Grisel Aguilar, Arya Singh
- Staff:** Gretchen Knauff
- Guests:** Lorena Mitchell - Coordinator for Community Mental Health Initiatives of the City of New Haven, David Agosta

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair B. Huang at 6:10 PM.

II. Introduction to guests

B. Huang briefly introduced the work of the Commission on Disabilities, and each member and guest briefly introduced themselves and their work. G. Knauff commented on D. Agosta's concerns about multiple ADA violations he has found around the city.

III. Conversation with Lorena Mitchell.

L. Mitchell introduced herself and described her work. Position is new and in the Department of Community Resilience, alongside homeless coordinator, and harm reduction manager. The Department is under the Community Services Administration. They are also looking for violence prevention and special projects manager. Has been in position for 3 months (is a 4-year funded position). Has been meeting with community partners to learn more about landscape of mental health services, where are gaps, how City can enhance coordination and collaboration among providers. Wants to hear from us how her role can be effective.

B. Huang – what is their vision for the position/department? L. Mitchell – we are developing the vision as we go. Thinking about not just service provision but also trying to address root causes – poverty, racism. Need to strike balance between addressing immediate crises and addressing those deeper causes, with limited resources available to the city. Projects include COMPASS – alternative to police response with a social worker/peer team. Violence prevention is huge priority – how to respond to communities that have experienced violence – healing spaces etc., but also how to prevent violence in the first place. Need better information about resources that are out there – many services exist but don't always communicate well with each other. Hoping that city can play role in streamlining this situation. B. Huang – how has community responded to her? L. Mitchell – most people very enthusiastic/positive. B. Huang – what is status of

COMPASS and how can we help? L. Mitchell – currently training existing emergency responders so they understand COMPASS and are on board. Plan to go live in October – staff have been hired and have been doing ride-alongs with the police. They will have their own van, both doing outreach and responding to calls. A. Harper – long process of developing this has been frustrating but has been important to do community engagement, make sure all are on board etc. D. Agosta – rolling out slowly – start with the easier things. G. Knauff – should be ready from the beginning with ASL, clearly accessible materials etc. A. Harper – will COMPASS team have access to the same interpretation resources that emergency responders currently have? L. Mitchell – will find out G. Knauff – suggests that they all have ADA training. Also recommends having a social services roundtable/informal event to make connections. B. Huang – should build on existing structures, e.g., CAN. L. McDonough – what other cities have served as models? L. Mitchell – will send out resource that Yale developed about this. B. Huang – what are plans for evaluation? Will information be made available to the community? A. Harper/L. Mitchell describe the data that will be collected/dashboard etc. S. Esposito – what about working with schools/young people? L. Mitchell – she was asked to focus on adults but as school started there has been more attention to work with young people. B. Huang – how is Dept of Community Resilience team coming together? L. Mitchell – we work v. collaboratively together, has amazing team. Trying to build a collaborative culture as the team comes together. B. Huang – please feel free to leverage us however we can be helpful!

III. Approval of June 13, 2022 and August 8, 2022 Minutes

The Commission Members reviewed and approved the minutes from June 13 and August 8, 2022. During this process, discussed need for more people with lived experience on the commission, the difficulty of the application process and the requirement that the Commission members be New Haven residents especially for the disability service providers.

IV. Old Business

A. Effective Communication

B. Huang – letter re. ASL resources was sent about a week ago to Mayor via the Commission, along with a cover letter. Has not heard back. Will follow up.

B. Elevator Ordinance

G. Knauff – moving slowly, trying to learn from other towns but not much out there. Had discussion about fines, could be better to require that landlords provide alternative housing after 72 hours, will end up costing them more so will be more of a push. LCI would have to be empowered to enforce the rule. S. Esposito – would there be requirement about hotel location/accessibility? G. Knauff – could make list of acceptable hotels. S. Esposito – LCI probably already has a list we can check.

C. Ordinance Language Update

G. Knauff – should be passed by Alders at next meeting, September 19, 2022. They may have a bill signing/press-release. Good opportunity to draw attention to the Commission and work we are doing. S. Esposito – could connect with National Disability Employment month (October).

D. Jaigantic

G. Knauff – have not been able to get a response from them. Frustrating given how engaged they were at first. B. Huang – hope they don't just care about optics but are actually committed.

VI. Other

G. Knauff – had contact with person from **Big Read**. They have chosen book written by person with disability and want series of events re. Supported Decision Making, Assistive Technology, COMPASS. Will invite her to come and speak to us.

D. Agosta – Commission is listed in Safe Routes for All report as tasked with listing locations where people with disabilities live. G. Knauff – we were not aware of that. Is inappropriate to imply that people with disabilities only live-in certain areas. S. Esposito – they looked early on at being inclusive of people with disabilities, but input was not ongoing. D. Agosta – concerned that new bike lanes cause ADA violations.

B. Huang – announces new job with Governor’s office of workforce strategy (OWS), no longer at housing collective.

G. Knauff – REV UP Connecticut is holding a **Candidates Forum on Disability Issues on Oct 12th 3-7pm, Sheraton Rocky Hill or on zoom**. All the candidates for the Connecticut Constitutional offices, Congressional Offices and Senate race have been invited to attend. Gretchen will send the information to everyone.

VII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:59pm.