

Commission on Disabilities - Meeting Minutes

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

November 14, 2022, 6:00 – 7:30 pm

Present: Billy Huang (Chair), Tricia Palluzzi, Annie Harper, Sally Esposito, Linda McDonough

Absent: Nina Silva, Grisel Aguilar, Arya Singh

Staff: Gretchen Knauff

Guests: Sandra Roberts, Ben Bond

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair B. Huang at 6:08 PM.

II. Introduction to guests

Guests and members introduced themselves, their work, and their reason for being on the commission.

III. Approval of September 12 and October 2022 minutes.

The Commission Members reviewed and approved the minutes from September 12 and October 17, 2022.

IV. Chairperson's report

- B. Huang reported on his work at Connecticut Office of Workforce Strategy:
 - the soon to come CareerConnect, a single-entry training portal, centralizing workforce development. People seeking jobs will sign up to career connect and be assessed in their interest and their training needs.
 - 2gen initiative – in collaboration with Office of Early Childhood, a holistic approach to wellbeing recognizing that it is multi-generation, need parental and child supports. One component is access to transportation with regard to access to employment. Also explore benefit cliff issues. G. Knauff noted that people on SSI and SSDI have options to avoid a benefits cliff so we need to educate people around this, suggests DOL contacts Aging and Disability Services.
 - Parent Leadership Training Institute (part of the new 2gen initiative)
 - Automatic admissions program, whereby graduating CT high school seniors are automatically admitted into participating state and private CT universities. G Knauff brought up concerns about the process for people with disabilities and ensuring their inclusion in the admissions process.

V. Old Business

A. Updates/Discussion

Effective Communication

B. Huang – has not heard back re. letter re. ASL resources sent to mayor via the commission. S. Matteson sent draft response to G. Knauff, she sent back some

concerns about it, and has not heard back yet. B. Huang will respond to S. Matteson copying the author group and encouraging them to add their feedback.

Elevator Ordinance

G. Knauff – part of a small workgroup making changes to the ordinance to bring issue under purview of LCI as they enforce other housing code issues. Added language to improve speed of response, requirement for people affected to have equivalent accommodation and transportation provided in case of elevator not being repaired in a timely fashion. Also added language about fines to be consistent with other code-enforcement fines. Also added enforcement mechanisms, notice inside elevators saying to call 911 if emergency, LCI if not emergency. Shared final draft from workgroup with this commission, S. Esposito concerned about exemption for city-owned property. It is exempt from fines but not the other obligations. B. Bond asks whether there are protections for tenants who may experience retaliation from landlords, particularly concerning as it may be disabled tenants who are most impacted. A. Harper notes that if retaliation took the form of rent increases/eviction threats tenants can go to the Fair Rent Commission or access Right to Counsel.

Agosta Request re. Sidewalks

We do not have the capacity to investigate D. Agosta's concerns further. T. Palluzzi – need a professional to assess these issues, we do not have the necessary training. G. Knauff notes that the city is well aware about the sidewalk issues. S. Esposito – the wording 'investigate' is in the commission's ordinance, so we need to determine what that means, and discuss whether we should change that. May not be appropriate to just say no. G. Knauff had asked SeeClickFix to add 'sidewalk problem' to their list of issues. B. Huang had to leave early, asked to discuss further in December. T. Palluzzi – could address it via the requirement that all public buildings need accessible routes in and out. G. Knauff – a sidewalk group is coming together, she will ask if a person from the commission can join. L. McDonough – could we facilitate an investigation – bring the parties together? T. Palluzzi – if this complaint had been sent directly to G. Knauff rather than via commission, she could ask for changes to be made, mostly via informal contacts. S. Esposito – as elevator work winds down perhaps we should have a subcommittee to work on sidewalk issues. A. Harper agrees that sidewalks are a key area for the commission to be involved in, overlap with work going on in city with safe streets, better cycling routes, public transportation etc. G. Knauff – should we write to City Engineer? S. Esposito – start with B. Bombero rather than City Engineer. T. Paluzzi – what about going to Legal Counsel – information re. access complaints, slip and falls. S. Esposito – just copy in everyone. Motion passed that B. Huang will send letter to G. Zinn, B. Bombero and J. Pescosolido.

Ordinance Language

G. Knauff suggested language for press release, but despite that has not seen a press release come out. S. Esposito – we should have event to celebrate both this ordinance AND the Elevator ordinance

Jaigantic Employment Group

G. Knauff – still have not been able to get a response from them.

B. Outreach to CT Parent Advocacy Center

T. Palluzzi has given Kiomary dates for Dec and Jan meetings, waiting for her to respond.

C. Notification system for individuals with Autism

T. Palluzzi – had seen a town that allows family to let local police dept know where people with autism live. She has introduced her son to local police dept. Would like to set up system in New Haven so that all families can share info about people with autism.

D. Big Read 2023

Book about person with a disability, ‘Sitting Pretty’. Will be lots of events around this book, at library, art installations, access to legal support etc. Opportunity to raise awareness about people with disabilities through all sorts of activities.

E. Preparing for Snow – Notices

S. Esposito – suggests that could add info to website reminding people to shovel their sidewalks, leaving wide enough at corners, shovel curb cuts.

VI. Nominations/Elections for Commission Office

All existing officers were approved to remain in their positions, and the schedule for meetings during 2023 was approved.

VII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:36pm.