

# **Commission on Disabilities - Meeting Minutes**

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

**Nov 13, 2023**

**Present:** Tricia Palluzzi, Annie Harper, Sally Esposito, Billy Huang, Ben Bond, Sandra Roberts

**Absent:** Carmen Correa-Rios, Grisel Aguilar-Cobos, Linda McDonough,

**Staff:** Gretchen Knauff

**Guests:** Misty Maza, Alder Claudia Herrera

## **I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Chair B. Huang at 6:07 PM.

Billy Huang invited Alder Hererra to introduce herself. During her introduction, she raised her concerns about whether the new construction in the city is accessible for people with disabilities. S. Esposito – also important, as C. Herrera as noted, is accessibility of approaches to buildings, convenience of bus stops etc.

## **II. Approval of October 16, 2023 minutes.**

Sally Esposito made a motion to accept the minutes and Tricia Palluzzi seconded. The Commission Members approved the minutes from the October meeting with Ben Bond and Annie Harper abstaining.

## **III. Report from the Chair**

Billy was happy to see the Elevator Ordinance pass especially since it was a unanimous vote. He appreciates all the hard work everyone put in to getting it passed including Misty Maza and Pat King.

As part of B. Huang's work as a Senior Policy Advisor for the state Office of Workforce Strategy, they are seeking to address the issue of nursing aide shortages. This affects persons with disabilities who might rely on nursing aides. He explained that they are working with various agencies and organizations to explore all the different reasons for the shortage, and possibilities to address it. C. Herrera asks whether it is possible for family members to be trained to assist relatives. The group discussed the various options available to people to get assistance, including options for family members to be paid to do the work.

## **IV. Election of Officers for 2014 (Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary)**

Tabled until December due to absence of several commissioners. S. Esposito asked for clarity around upcoming end of term dates, pipeline of new members. G. Knauff clarified that Lena. Esposito is in pipeline, will be voted on in next Alder's meeting. Sally made a motion to table the vote until the December meeting. Billy seconded. The motion passed unanimously. M. Maza clarified the rules around commissioner term lengths. B. Bond said that he will be leaving the state end of May 2024.

## **V. Old Business**

### **A. Elevator Ordinance**

B. Huang expressed satisfaction at the unanimous vote on the elevator ordinance, and is looking forward to continuing to work on this issue at the state level. He appreciated the hard work of the commission members, corporation counsel, alders etc. S. Esposito described the joyful atmosphere in the chambers when the ordinance passed. She has personally been working on this for decades. G. Knauff – how do we get the word out about this so that tenants know their rights? Did not get great response when asked about a press conference. Commissioners brainstormed ideas for distribution. Could share via Fair Rent Commission, CT Tenant Union, LCI, Senior centers, management teams, Elm City Communities etc. Could incorporate into landlord licensing process.

C. Herrera will talk with Sean Matteson and LCI about this to make sure that they do their duty to get the word out. S. Esposito – should do some education/outreach, (e.g. LCI board, elderly services commission) to get buy-in and then invite to a joint event/press conference. Need to make sure that the signage is being posted as is required and that it is ADA compliant. Maybe Commission can create a model sign.

### **B. Notification for Individuals with Autism**

G. Knauff updated the Commission that this project is proceeding quickly. The police are trying to get it done as soon as possible. They indicated that they are beta testing in November and then it can go live. After the testing, they will announce Walk with Derek to the public through a press conference. Gretchen asked if Commission members could be invited to participate. The NHPD will let us know.

### **C. Legislative Forum**

B. Huang – what do we want from this? Need to understand who our state legislators are, and how we can support state level legislation. Molly Cole can assist with how to advocate for legislation. Also, how to stay in touch regarding upcoming legislation that impacts people with disabilities. S. Esposito – we need to advocate for disability issues to be included in city level issues that go to the state legislature. A. Harper – might be better to focus on a specific issue that we can take on and work through to conclusion, as we did with the elevator ordinance.

## **VI. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:50pm.