

Commission on Disabilities - Meeting Minutes

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

December 11, 2023

Present: Tricia Palluzzi, Annie Harper, Sally Esposito, Billy Huang, Ben Bond, Sandra Roberts, Carmen Correa-Rios, Linda McDonough, Lena Esposito

Absent: Grisel Aguilar-Cobos

Staff: Gretchen Knauff

Guest: David Agosta

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair B. Huang at 6:12 PM.

II. Welcome L. Esposito

Billy Huang welcomed Lena Esposito, new commission member. L. Esposito introduced herself and her work. She has a child who has autism, and has, since that time, become involved with multiple advocacy organizations around the state, with a focus on children and adolescents. She is particularly interested in education for parents about support available for children in schools. L. Esposito asked whether it would be possible to meet in person sometimes.

III. Approval of December 16, 2023 minutes.

S. Esposito made a motion to accept the minutes with the edit suggested by Sally Esposito. L. McDonough seconded. The Commission Members approved the minutes from the October meeting with Ben Bond and Annie Harper abstaining. S. Esposito encouraged the Commission to consider supporting advocacy at the state level.

IV. Elections

All existing office holders were unopposed in the elections and were voted in by acclamation. Continuing in the positions are Billy Huang – Chair, Tricia Palluzzi - Vice Chair, and Annie Harper – Secretary.

After the Elections, there was a short conversation on who had terms expiring during the upcoming year. The terms were quickly reviewed and G Knauff agreed to send the information to everyone.

V. Old Business

A. Elevator Ordinance – Next Steps

S. Esposito suggested that members of the Commission develop relationships with LCI staff so they can work on this together as it proceeds. G. Knauff suggested that we encourage LCI to use its contacts to share information about the ordinance. B. Huang reminded us of the list that we came up with at the last meeting and suggested writing a summary handout to share with people – should get input from LCI. L. McDonough, C. Correa-Rios, L. Esposito, and G Knauff will make

a draft. The one pager created for the Alders can serve as a basis for the document. Other suggestions include:

1. Press Release – Contact Lenny Speiler, NH Communications Officer
2. Press Conference with all departments and Alders who played a role in supporting the ordinance change.
3. Fair Rent Commission – Tenant Union contacts – G. Knauff to contact Wildaliz Bermudez
4. LCI – send to licensed landlords – G. Knauff to contact Mark Stroud
5. Management Teams
6. Libraries
7. Health Centers
8. Elm City Communities
9. Center for Disability Rights – mailing list (Carmen and Sandy)
10. Elderly services

C. Correa-Rios suggested posting on social media. S. Esposito reminded the group that long-term monitoring/awareness raising will be needed to ensure this ordinance is put into practice – it would be good to have a long-term committee that works closely with LCI. A. Harper shares that while conducting research around the state with tenants reliant on Home Medical Devices they have heard many stories about broken elevators – should we share with different stakeholders across the state? G Knauff – HUD may be interested to hear about this – she will get the name suggested by Valerie Fletcher when she met with the Commission. S. Esposito suggests contacting the State Elevator Inspector. Also contact the New Haven branch of the state prosecutor’s office.

B. Notification System for Individuals with Autism - G Knauff reported that the New Haven Police Department has not completed putting together the Walk with Derek program at the Department. The Department liaison told G Knauff that the project was well down the road. T. Palluzzi – wants the different towns working on this to communicate with each other, as well as letting New Haven residents know how they can enter information into the database. The group discussed the possibility of setting up a state-wide system. T. Palluzzi wants to encourage meet ‘n greet between police and children in all areas. B. Huang – is there a connection with COMPASS in New Haven?

C. Legislative Forum - G. Knauff - Session starts in February – propose to offer a virtual legislative training on Jan 10th at 6pm. Could be open to the public, co-sponsored by the Commission and the Connecticut State Independent Living Council (Molly Cole). B Huang and G Knauff met with Molly Cole to discuss the session.

VI. New Business

A. Long Wharf – Sally

S. Esposito – will update next meeting.

B. Bella Vista – Billy

B. Huang regularly visits Bella Vista, is hearing about severe social isolation, need for social activities to be brought to the location. G. Knauff – should talk with elderly services about potentially moving activities form senior centers to Bella Vista. T. Palluzzi – could give credit to college students to visit Bella Vista residents.

VII. Public Comment

D. Agosta asks for the Commission to make requests to other commissions, as those commissions are obliged to listen to this commission. First, to the Parks commission - the tree stump removal policy that requires stump to stay in place until someone agrees to water a new tree. The old stumps can cause ADA violations. He asks more generally for the support of the commission in addressing ADA issues regarding sidewalks and parks access, specifically to East Rock Park.

IX. Adjourn.

B. Huang made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and C. Correa-Rios seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 7:50pm.