



TONI N. HARP
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ROBIN TOUSEY-AYERS
Chairperson

Commission on Disabilities Meeting Minutes

City Hall 4th Floor Conference Room

May 12, 2014

Present: Jenifer Blemings, Iva Long, Tricia Palluzzi, Matthew Ranelli, and Robin Tousey-Ayers

Staff: Michelle Duprey and Paula Pernal

Absent: Maria Rivera and Jack Tsai

Meeting called to order at 5:24 p.m.

An introduction of each Commission member takes place.

Minutes

Robin states that there are a few changes to the April Minutes. The first change is located on page 2 under the Section Chairman's Report. The word Chairman should be changed to Chairperson. The second change is located on page 3 under the Section Department Report. The acronym SBAC should be spelled out. Matt states that SBAC refers to Smarter Balance Assessment Consortium. This should be added to the Minutes.

Matt made a motion to accept the April minutes as revised.

Jenifer seconded the motion.

Iva abstained from voting.

April minutes are approved as revised.

Chairperson's Report

Robin states that she has nothing else to report this month. Robin mentions two items that she has been involved in personally and through her employment. The first item is The New Haven Ballet had their Annual Spring Performance this past weekend. Robin mentions that inside their program they highlight the Shared-Ability Project involving older adolescents with disabilities who participate in a dance program with active ballet students learning dance and movements. This year their piece was called, "I Like You". Robin also states that on May 1, 2014 she attended the 2nd Annual Alliance School Districts Meeting. Robin states that district & school leaders and community partners attended to share issues on physical, mental, health & homelessness. Robin mentions that the new issue for education training is trauma awareness & safety in schools. The importance is focusing on ensuring that every student has a relationship with an adult in school.

Department Report

Michelle states that she just finished the four-hour Police Recruit training for the Police Department. Michelle states that she started the training for city staff that deal with the public on how to communicate with people who are deaf and hearing impaired. Michelle mentions that the ACLU made a video for the deaf community about interacting with law enforcement. She states that she pre-screened this video with the Assistant Chief of the Police Department in order to know what information the community is given. Michelle strongly suggests the use of an interpreter. Michelle also states that she has a guide for city staff.

Michelle states that she extended an invitation to Jonathan Slifka, the Governor's Liaison to the Disability Community, to speak at the Commission's September meeting.

Michelle would like all the members of the Commission to think about topics that they would like to work on in the future.

Michelle also sent out the Invitation from Redicker last week. She explains that it pertains to the rate increases of My Ride.

Old Business

Robin reviewed the minutes and states that the Board of Alders Reception was successful. Robin states that she made a list of the Alders of each Commission member. Robin mentions that Michelle raised an issue of elevators not working or not being repaired and tenants are not being relocated. Robin states that the Commission should work on creating legislation to empower Livable City Initiative (“LCI”) to give out fines to landlords that do not comply. Matt states that he will follow-up with Mark Stroud at LCI.

Robin states that she sent Mayor Toni N. Harp a letter congratulating her on becoming New Haven’s next Mayor and inviting her to meet with the Commission. Robin is still working on scheduling a date with the Mayor’s Administrative Assistant. Robin mentions that hopefully the Mayor can attend the June Commission meeting.

Robin asks the members of the Commission to think about the issues to discuss with the Mayor. Robin asks Matt & Michelle if the Commission should address the Title II violation issue. Michelle states that Title II pertains to the State of Connecticut. Robin states that the members should Google, Connecticut Alliance District, in order to learn what schools are receiving from the State Department of Education. Robin begins a discussion about youth with disabilities transitioning out of high school. Tricia mentions that there are challenges with hiring & training qualified staff and para’s for special education. Iva asks about the issue of school bullying. Robins states that this issue is now called school climate. Jenifer states that there is a mandate or policy that all schools must have this, but often times the schools deny that it even exists in their schools. Matt mentions that the Commission should meet with the Board of Education concerning all of these issues and challenges: testing, training, and climate. Matt also states that the Commission should ask to be a liaison to the

Board of Education. Robin reiterates that the Commission should build a relationship with the Board of Education & the District. Iva mentions her concerns about youth aging out and not having a safety net. Iva suggests forming a better relationship with CT Behavioral Health Partnership. Matt asks Michelle about employment and mentoring day for students with disabilities. Michelle states that mentoring day has been cut due to staffing levels. Michelle states that all federal contractors must meet the new guidelines, but she has not seen this happen yet. Michelle mentions that the unemployment rate of the disabled community is double that of the unemployment rate of the non-disabled community. Michelle suggests that the Commission revive working on the issue of the Jobs Pipeline. She states that with employment, there is life satisfaction and health benefits. Michelle states that people with disabilities are considered minorities. Michelle states that the Office of Equal Opportunity for the City of New Haven has Disability Federal Hiring Standards & Goals.

Robin reiterates the issues to discuss with Mayor Toni Harp: employment/jobs-Jenifer; Mental Health-Iva; Board of Education-Tricia; and, Mobility/Accessibility-Matt.

Robin states that the Commission should try to recruit new members.

New Business

Robin states that there was an article in the New Haven Register today about the Mayor and the City. Robin states that the City has a new Director of the Office of Development and Policy aimed at getting outside grants. Robin mentions that the article further states that the Mayor wishes to hire grant writers. Michelle states that writing grants for the disabled community is a specialized task that most grant writers are not familiar with. Michelle further states that she usually assists others when the grant involves the disabled community. Michelle mentions that the role of her department is compliance and the role of the Commission is community service. Robin asks Michelle if the Commission should ask the Mayor for

additional staff for Michelle's office. Michelle states that it is more appropriate to focus on what has been lost due to staff changes.

Other Business

None.

Public Comment/Announcements

None.

Matt made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Jenifer seconded the motion.

Motion to adjourn the meeting was approved unanimously at 6:50 p.m.