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Promoting
 **Accessibility**
In New Haven

DAVID HICKS
Chairperson

Commission on Disabilities Minutes
City Hall 4th Floor Conference Room
November 4, 2013

Present: David Hicks, Jenifer Blemings, Cecile Brodsky, Matthew Ranelli, Maria Rivera, Robin Tousey-Ayers and Jack Tsai

Staff: Michelle Duprey, Paula Pernal

Absent: Christopher Hicks

Meeting called to order at 5:30 p.m.

David Hicks and Matthew Ranelli present via telephone.

Cecile Brodsky, Vice Chair asked Robin to Chair the meeting for her.

Minutes

Robin asked Commission members if they had any changes to the October minutes. No one responded.

Jack made a motion to accept the October minutes.

Matthew seconded the motion.

October minutes are approved unanimously.

Chairman's Report

David stated that he has nothing to report this month. He wished all the members good luck and expressed that he is available to the Commission at anytime.

Department Report

Michelle stated that she sent the members of the Commission an email about recruiting new members. She mentioned there is a possible candidate.

Michelle shared that the mayoral election tomorrow will result in changes at City Hall.

Michelle stated that she attended the statewide ADA luncheon last week where several individuals received awards. She said that Ted Kennedy, Jr. spoke at the luncheon and pointed out that if the ADA was a piece of legislation now, it would never pass Congress. Michelle recalled that Lowell Wiecker was one of the original drafters of the ADA and that he removed the Insurance piece.

Michelle stated individuals are gearing up for the legislative session. She has spoken with Kathy Butler about legislation on physician assisted suicide. There will be many debates and dialogues at the legislature on this subject.

Old Business

Michelle stated that the State of Connecticut has not begun planning for the ADA 25th Anniversary in July 2015. Robin mentioned some of the past participations of the Commission include: a wheelchair basketball performance on the New Haven Green called "Spokebenders"; veterans speaking to Wilbur Cross students; a panel on employment and ADA; teaching sign language & singing to children and poster making contest and transportation providers on the New Haven Green as part of International Festival of Arts & Ideas; Michelle suggested that representation of disability culture should be a part of the International Festival of Artists and Ideas since 2014 will be the 25th Anniversary of the ADA. Robin suggested asking New Haven Ballet and Brad Broth to perform Shared Ability as part of the ADA 25th Anniversary festivities. This program pairs dancers with persons with disabilities in a dance performance.

Robin asked Jenifer to be the official contact from the Commission to the International Festival of Arts & Ideas and to contact Marylou. Jenifer agreed.

New Business

Robin stated that the Commission needs to move to the Annual Elections. She stated that she volunteered to be Chairperson of the Commission for the coming year. Robin also stated that she nominated Jenifer Blemings as Vice Chair and Matthew Ranelli as Secretary of the Commission. Both members have accepted their nominations. Robin asked the other members if they object. No one responded.

Cecile made a motion to accept the 2014 Slate.
Jack seconded the motion.
The 2014 Officer Slate is approved unanimously.

Matthew left the meeting at 5:40 p.m.
Michelle arrived at the meeting at 5:40 p.m.

Other Business

David and Robin discussed about managing members that drop out or that do not attend meetings. David stated that this gets in the way of having a quorum. Robin suggested an upgrade in the phone system so that the members may take advantage of using conference calling. Michelle suggested amending the by-laws by adding that flexible attendance is acceptable. David stated that a members' absence will still affect the quorum and it should be changed to be removed from quorum status. Michelle will distribute the by-laws for an initial discussion at the next meeting in December.

Robin stated that she attended a forum on "Physician Assisted Suicide: A Dialogue about the Potential Impact on People with Disabilities". The crux of the forum was learning about people with disabilities and their opinions on this subject. It is posted on CTN.

Cecile asked about individuals who do not want it. Robin stated that there are states that allow this. She also mentioned a group called, "Not Dead Yet" and the Connecticut group called, "Second Thought Connecticut".

Michelle stated that the crux of this issue in some states is that individuals with non-life threatening illnesses do not want to be a burden to society and living

with a disability is part of the problem. Michelle stated that individuals living with disabilities are fearful that they will be targeted. Robin stated she understands there are a few medical providers in Connecticut who are in favor of this legislation. Cecile expressed her surprise to hear this.

Robin said she will send members resource links. Michelle mentioned this issue will be the most active area of legislation for the disability community in the upcoming sessions.

Robin shared there is a statewide "Suicide Prevention Task Force". Several of her co-workers are members and bring the issues of disability to those meetings. She shared that the task force offers a training program called Question, Persuade and Refer, three steps anyone can learn to help prevent suicide and that the Commission might wish to ask them to speak on this subject.

Robin discussed the future leadership of the Commission. She encouraged all the members to take advantage of their contacts and relationships with the aldermen and the mayoral candidates.

David left the meeting at 6:13 p.m.

Jack asked if the Commission has a fund or budget. Michelle stated that the Commission does not have a separate budget, but that the members can apply for a grant or access her budget.

Public Comment/Announcements

Jenifer stated that the next Commission meeting is on Monday, December 9, 2013.

Cecile made a motion to adjourn meeting.

Robin seconded the motion.

Motion to adjourn the meeting was approved unanimously at 6:20 p.m.