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COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES
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BILLY HUANG
Chairperson

Commission on Disabilities - Meeting Minutes

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

September 13, 2021, 6:00 – 7:30 pm

- Present:** Billy Huang, Tricia Palluzzi, Grisel Aguilar, Annie Harper, Sally Esposito, Arya Singh, Robin Tousey-Ayers
- Staff:** Gretchen Knauff
- Absent:** None
- Guests:** Nina Silva

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Billy Huang at 6:09 pm at which time a quorum was present.

II. Approval of July 2021 Minutes

Members reviewed and approved the minutes from July.

III. Chairperson’s report

B. Huang and G. Knauff met over the summer to discuss future planning for the commission – see more below in new business. B. Huang has taken position heading Housing Innovation Lab with Supportive Housing Works. G. Knauff mentions having had conversations with rep payees re. issue of people who choose to be homeless, how to support these people.

IV: Departmental report

G. Knauff chair of Emergency Operations Center region 2, at this point no-one else on that committee and no budget. Working with Independent Living Centers and other groups statewide on how to collaborate in different sectors. Trying to set up system so that Independent Living Centers can have resources available for Emergency Management Systems. Still working on polling place corrections in New Haven, getting corp. counsel involved to make improvements. Working on vaccine policies around the city. She will be responsible for managing requests for medical waivers from covid vaccine for new hires. Also updating website. Responded to 46 requests for information, assistance and complaints so far this year. Met with Nicole Jefferson of Commission for Equal Oppos (CEO) re. elevator issue – materials need updating, eg around first person language. Planning to do training for police. S. Esposito involved with community gardens, opportunities for high school students to be involved. Will look into ensuring that students with disabilities are included. B. Huang mentioned that Dept of Community Resilience may be good resource to tap into re. Emergency Management Systems.

A. Harper shared update on Community Crisis Response Team (CCRT) planning. S. Esposito highlighted need to improve 911 system, people often get put off by confusing messages,

unhelpful/poorly trained dispatchers. G. Knauff – CCRT planning materials should include request for accommodations, eg if someone needs sign interpretation they should contact the organizers 3 days in advance. S. Esposito – lawsuits filed previously by person with seizure disorders who were poorly treated by the police.

IV. Old business

Ideas for next steps for Special Education discussions. T. Palluzzi - New Haven doesn't have a special-ed PTO. She's tried many times but is hard to get people to attend due to childcare, job obligations. It would help if BoE helped get it together, particularly for new students. B. Huang - could we organize a rights training for parents? G. Knauff – would need to get the word out through press release etc. S. Esposito – material from federally funded organization called CADRE helps with preventing conflict between schools and parents of children with special ed. needs. Could put some of the material on our website. B. Huang – will someone here take ownership of that? T. Palluzzi will reach out to CPAC to explore further. G. Aguilar emphasized importance of offering everything in Spanish, she can help.

Elevator ordinance next steps. How can we improve the language emphasizing enforcement when violations happen? G. Knauff - Nicole Jefferson of CEO, says she is short-staffed (her and one other person) since getting her job back this year after a legal dispute so can only do so much. Enforcement needs to run through LCI but they are not active on the issue. B. Huang – let's focus on finding out where ordinance language needs to be changed. S. Esposito – G. Knauff should talk with Al Lucas in legislative services, can we do this across ordinances, what is the process to get it done systemically?

Youth/Summer Camp issues: Invite Becky Bombero to a meeting to ask her what changes they will make to make summer camps inclusive. Question of funding. G. Knauff had complaint from parent who could not easily access Trowbridge center in East Rock using her walker, would have been easier if she could have driven directly to the center. Other son wasn't offered alternative meal despite food allergies. R. Tousey-Ayers – Trowbridge center staff need to know what the options are (there is a road to the center) and to be sure to let people know.

V. New business

Strategic planning. B. Huang – have google drive set up for the commission, we can keep track of issues, add to it outside meeting times etc. G. Knauff – plan to develop larger strategic plan with help of a 3rd party facilitator. There is so much we need to do, but everyone is busy. Take a pause/step back and think strategically about what we can accomplish as a commission. Maybe get more members first so that we have the people we need to take projects on – or have increasing membership be part of the strategic planning? B. Huang – we all need to be clear about our mission statement. S. Esposito – look at our existing mandate, have an activity where we all read the ordinance, are we all as familiar with it as we need to be?

Introduction from N. Silva – lives in Dixwell, is Dixwell Management Chair, will step down this month after 4 years, has 21-year old son with Down's Syndrome. Always loves to help people, has wanted to join for many years. B. Huang/S. Esposito – welcomed N. Silva, encouraged to join the commission.

R. Tousey-Ayers – mention meeting last Friday in Fair Haven about increased gun violence, need to keep this in mind as far as relates to disabilities. S. Esposito – note the trauma of living in a neighborhood with regular violence. Over the next month Fair Haven community will occupy the space where the latest murder happened.

V. Adjournment

At 7:43 pm, a motion to adjourn was made by B. Huang and seconded by T. Palluzzi after which the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Annie Harper