



JUSTIN ELICKER
Mayor

COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES
CITY OF NEW HAVEN
165 CHURCH STREET
NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT 06510
(203) 946-7833 - VOICE (203) 946-8582 - TTY/TDD
(203) 946-8587 - FAX



BILLY HUANG
Chairperson

Commission on Disabilities - Meeting Minutes

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

November 8, 2021, 6:00 – 7:30 PM

- Present:** Billy Huang (Chair), Tricia Palluzzi, Sally Esposito, Arya Singh, Annie Harper, Grisel Aguilar, Robin Tousey-Ayers, Nina Silva
- Staff:** Gretchen Knauff
- Absent:** None
- Guests:** Linda McDonough, Alder Salvatore DeCola

I. Call to Order - The meeting was called to order by Chair B. Huang at 6:10 PM.

The Commission members agreed to move the Elevator Issue to the top of the agenda since Alder DeCola was present at that time for discussion and needed to leave for another meeting.

II. Old Business - Discussion of Elevator Ordinance with Sal DeCola

B. Huang – explains that language in the elevator ordinance re: enforcement is not clear enough and that we have considered changing the department responsible for enforcement to ensure it happens. S. DeCola suggests rewriting the ordinance to reflect updated codes. He will discuss with Al Lucas how to move this forward with all players in room at same time. S. Esposito – last time we met with staff independently, agree we need everyone present. G. Knauff – in discussions about problems with housing for people with disabilities, Livable Cities Initiative (LCI) has been very responsive –enforcement responsibility should move from Commission on Equal Opportunities (CEO) to LCI. S. Esposito – record should be available to city departments when they visit housing re. status of elevator in that location, could Municipality database be useful here? S. DeCola doesn't know status of Municipality. Departments don't want to take responsibility for enforcement of this, costs city \$1000s as fire department repeatedly needs to bring residents up and downstairs to enable them to attend appointments. Increasing number of high-rise housing being built. It is unacceptable that elevators remain broken for a week at a time. He will also help with revising wording. T. Palluzzi – should add something in the ordinance about an elevator contract to speed up repairs. S. DeCola – next steps: i) raise with board ii) line up with appropriate committee. Makes sense to start in March. Before then we should work on ordinance wording. Can be done in lay language – will then change as appropriate. Will be compiled in shared google doc
<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1VpLjhdExp4EUiXzAMJbf3LR6-jJSQIAG>.

Alder DeCola left the meeting, and the agenda was resumed.

III. Approval of October 18, 2021 Meeting Minutes

A Quorum was established, and the Commission Members reviewed and approved the minutes from October 18, 2021.

IV. Commission Elections for Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary

All agree to stay in current positions. No need to vote – was decided by acclamation.

V. National Disability Employment Awareness Month Follow up

- John Wardzala was invited to speak about transportation but was not available for this meeting. He will let us know when he is able to meet with us.
- Developing employment group to meet with Jaigantic. G. Knauff has met with groups that work with youth, with people with intellectual disabilities, and Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), aim to put together meeting. B. Huang – good opportunity to have input here as they're first starting up. They do not have people on their board with disability-related experience, so our ongoing input is crucial. S. Esposito – we need to keep the momentum going, we should follow up with J. Buster to build a relationship. They've already hired 50 people. We should be involved moving forward, bake some of this into their HR policies. G. Knauff – their perception of disability is very narrow, the groups she's contacting is with the aim of expanding that view. S. Esposito – we should make use of the expertise on this commission. B. Huang – they should send their leaders to us for education, to understand barriers that people with disabilities face. S. Esposito – let's cultivate relationship with J. Buster. Led by G. Knauff. A. Harper – introduce J. Buster to local supported employment programs.

VI. Review of Commission on Disabilities Document (for Strategic Planning preparation).

G. Knauff – important that we all know the bylaws, she shares slides that summarize the ordinance. Begins with definitions of key terms. Sec. 16 1/2-13 explains history of neglect/discrimination and need for local government to address this. Sec. 14 establishes the commission on disabilities. Fifteen members, 7 with disabilities, 4 can be family members or active in disability community, 4 reps of disabled service agencies. Sec. 15 – organization of the commission. Sec. 16 – powers and duties – seek to reduce physical and attitudinal barriers, establish, and maintain cooperative relationships with public and private agencies, study individual/community problems which limits rights/restrict opportunities for people with disabilities. Can issue reports to promote public awareness, receive complaints and grievances, work with federal, state, and local agencies to foster development of programs and services and increase opportunities to maximize independence and enhance quality of life. Promote cooperative program planning and development among service providers to expand delivery of services, conduct public forums and raise awareness. Encourage commitment of public/private resources, increase advocacy, monitor city programs, make recommendations to mayor/alders. Sec. 17 – establishes dept of services for people with disabilities, executes decisions of the commission, provides staff support to the commission, enforces ordinances, monitors, and takes action to ensure city compliance with federal and state laws/regulations. A. Harper asks for it to be shared in google drive. R. Tousey-Ayers – this ordinance was written close to 30 years ago. Content is ok, but language needs to be updated – more person-centered. S. Esposito – update the 'findings' using most recent census data. Invite someone from DataHaven to help us with that. B. Huang – we should retain powers, prepare a document showing the state of disabled community here in New Haven. There is a version from 1999. G. Knauff – could get Community Foundation to fund DataHaven to do a disability survey. Then start our strategic planning around this. Could also get a Yale researcher to do this. G. Aguilar – CARE at Southern may be interested in this. B. Huang – could ask [Molly Cole](#) to help us with strategic planning exercise.

VII: Old Business

Special Education follow-up. T. Palluzzi continuing to follow up, will give update at next meeting.

VIII: Polling Place experience on November 2, 2021

A. Harper at Wilbur Cross and L. McDonough at Nathan Hale did not have good experiences using the accessible voting machine. Staff did not know the system, the voting machine was awkward to reach, and there was no privacy. L. McDonough's ballot was incorrectly printed. T. Palluzzi – Nathan Hale had accessible site with signage, though did not look at accessible machine. S. Esposito – community room of public housing at Ferry/Chatham - new facility so has ramp. Accessible machine was on low tabletop, difficult to access and no signage. Need to ensure they have signage and a guide to setting up the machine. Also, a public information campaign. G. Knauff – there was an article about accessible machines in the NHI in advance. R. Tousey-Ayers – voted at King Robinson, did not notice any signage about people with disabilities. Doors are not electronically set to open and close for a person who needs that.

VIII. Adjournment

At 7:44 pm, a motion to adjourn was made by B. Huang and seconded by S. Esposito after which the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Annie Harper