



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

**October 18, 2021, 6:00 – 7:30 pm**

- Present:** Billy Huang (Chair), Tricia Palluzzi, Grisel Aguilar, Annie Harper, Sally Esposito, Robin Tousey-Ayers
- Staff:** Gretchen Knauff
- Absent:** Arya Singh
- Guests:** Linda McDonough, Nina Silva, Jackie Buster, Yaiden (Fair Haven resident), Lucy Gellman, Mary Ann

### I. Call to Order

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

### II. Introductions

Billy asked everyone to briefly introduce themselves. The introductions included: Billy Huang (Commission Member), Sally Esposito (Commission Member), Mary Ann Moran (Guest, Community Garden Coordinator in Fair Haven), Jackie Buster (Jaigantic Studios), Grisel Aguilar-Cobos (Commission Member), Tricia Palluzzi (Commission Member), Lucy Gellman (Reporter, Editor for The Arts Paper), Nina Silva (Candidate for Commission Membership), Linda McDonough (Candidate for Commission Membership), Robin Tousey-Ayres (Commission Member), Yaiden (Guest).

### III. Approval of September 13, 2021 Meeting Minutes

A Quorum was established, and the Commission Members reviewed and approved the minutes from September. (Annie Harper, Commission Member, joined the meeting during the process of approving the minutes.)

### III. Guest Speaker - Jackie Buster, Jaigantic Studio's Chief Impact Officer

J. Buster shared Jaigantic's mission statement, which includes a focus on diversity. Plan to build 25 sound stages, 1000s of jobs, focus on underserved and diverse communities, will have internships, apprenticeships etc. 2020-2024 phase: 1500 local paid apprentices trained (some starting at \$28 per hour) and more. Many jobs will be fully accessible - directors, producers etc. Some jobs require able-bodied folks, but many don't. Emphasize green energy, community embedded etc. L. McDonough – what about non-physical disabilities e.g., autism, ADHD etc? Will there be mentors on site? J. Buster – not yet, but an investor has a son with autism, and we will be focusing on this area – training staff etc. B. Huang – what about training for people with disabilities, including high school students? J. Buster – we're working with New Haven Works and The workplace in Bridgeport. We're

very transparent – we don't know what we don't know, so we want to learn! Our plan is to make a plan that works for everyone. A. Harper – what about reentry population? Jackie – yes, strong focus on reentry. We're getting ready to hire a young man from Fair Haven who was previously incarcerated – Carlos Bergos. Re. high school students, we have a production assistant challenge, but have to be 18 years old or older. Plan to have youth programming once we're in Fair Haven. G. Knauff – is there consideration in hiring someone who would make sure folks with a disability would be supported? Also, you should be in touch with Youth at Work program. J. Buster – agree that we need a person to provide this support. B. Huang – stay in touch via community advisory boards. J. Buster – I'm from here, New Haven residents come first for me. That will also be part of Carlos' role. S. Esposito – Is there any publicity material which would be easier for people with disabilities/vision issues that may make it difficult to process information. J. Buster – we do have simplified versions. G. Knauff – website should be accessible. J. Buster – we're working on that. She requests a follow-up meeting with more of her team members, in next couple of weeks. G. Knauff suggests connecting with Bureau of Rehab Services etc. S. Esposito – there may be issues with wheelchair-users using CT transit buses between Shelton and New Haven. B. Huang – we will help you craft your disability equity vision. G. Knauff – also focus on practicalities – how to make sure you have the right people in place. A. Harper – hope you can help with the social issues, people with mental illness, drug addiction etc. J. Buster – we like to think that putting the studio here is the first step to bring about the healing – financial stability leads to better mental health, less domestic violence.

#### **IV: Old Business**

Special Education follow-up. T. Palluzzi – wants to arrange a presentation but want to be sure that people are interested, and that the presentation covers what people need. Want to provide support early on when a child first enters the school system. Want to hear if people would be interested in this – do a focus group or something similar to ask what would be helpful. Then arrange the presentation. L. McDonough – does the Parent Partnership Council still exist? T. Palluzzi will reach out to early childhood folks to find out what would be helpful. G. Knauff suggested that she get in touch with Kio from the Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center to hear their parent engagement experiences and to see if they have done any surveys with parents.

Elevator Ordinance – B. Huang noted that a lot has been going on – have we done all we can or are there next steps? S. Esposito – was conversation with Nicole Jefferson at Commission on Equal Opportunities helpful? G. Knauff – she is just back after she won case re. her unfair dismissal, and has no staff, so she just focuses on making sure that city contracts comply with requirements re. hiring. Doesn't feel very confident that she would have time to deal with complaints like this. LCI seems to have more potential. S. Esposito – what about building inspection department? B. Huang – need everyone in the room, otherwise they'll keep pinballing around. May be better to get an alder working on this – have them come and work with us. Sal DeCola was previously v. helpful. Bella Vista – has had power cut in half of a building, over 200 people had to be relocated. T. Palluzzi – I can reach out to Sal DeCola. S. Esposito – we should help get the word out that there is an ordinance, that may generate some complaints which we can then use to ensure enforcement. B. Huang – yes, should start at Bella Vista, but other places too. A. Harper – some part of elderly services will be at the Q House – take advantage of the opening. S. Esposito – do a press release about elevator ordinance, plus the work we do. G. Knauff can help with printing flyers. S. Esposito, do we have capacity (and permission) to post them at every elevator at Bella Vista?

Strategic planning. B. Huang – we need a strategic plan and vision for this commission, should get someone to come help us with this? G. Knauff – do a review of Commission on Disabilities ordinance next month, then do strategic planning in new year.

Schedule for next year – all agree.

Nominations for Commission on Disability Offices. – Currently, Billy Huang is Chair, Tricia Palluzzi is Vice-Chair and Annie Harper is Secretary. Billy asked if everyone wanted to continue in their positions. No-one chooses to change. Elections will be held at the November meeting.

New Commissioners - Next Monday, L. McDonough and N. Silva will go before the Aldermanic Affairs Committee consideration and for approval. R. Tousey-Ayers – each of them should prepare a brief bio to share with the Alders in advance. Gretchen will send everyone a link to the meeting when she receives it.

**V. Adjournment**

At 7:47 pm, a motion to adjourn was made by B. Huang and seconded by T. Palluzzi after which the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Annie Harper