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MARIA ELENA ALVAREZ
Chairperson

Commission on Disabilities Minutes
April 10, 2006

Present: Dana Canevari, Marjorie Eichler, Chris Getlein, David Hicks, Stan Kontogiannis, Elaine Quinn, Linda Reeder, Matthew Ranelli, Robin Tousey-Ayers

Absent: Maria Elena Alvarez

Staff: Michelle Duprey

David Hicks opened the meeting and chaired the meeting until Dana Canevari joined the meeting. The minutes for March 2006 were reviewed. A motion was made by Linda Reeder, which was seconded, to accept the minutes as written. With the exception of Elaine Quinn who abstained from voting, the minutes were unanimously approved.

Chairman's Report

No report

Department report

Michelle Duprey reported that the annual proposed Department budget was approved by the Board of Aldermen. The Board had questions regarding the Department other than budgetary matters.

Michelle Duprey said that a couple of weeks ago she saw on the news that Naugatuck Commission on Disabilities got cameras from the State Department in order to photograph handicapped parking violations.

She also reported that she sent Kelly Murphy (Economic Development Administrator) e-mail about attending a Commission meeting in May regarding the Ninth Square housing deal and affordable housing in New Haven. Ms. Murphy said she is too busy to attend but suggested Wendy Clark, Deputy Director of Economic Development, attend instead. Michelle Duprey said she also wanted to schedule a meeting with the Executive Director of HANH, but wanted to get feedback from the members before scheduling

Michelle Duprey talked about an interesting calculation she estimated recently. She stated that if Disability Services had the same staff ratio as Elderly Services, she would have a staff of 25.5 staff persons, instead of 2 for the entire population. It is estimated that there are about 6,000 persons who are elderly in New Haven. There was discussion about this issue with the Commissioners, as to whether there was any action the Commission might take. After much discussion, it was decided it was too late to make an impact on this year's budget/staff ratio, but it is something to think about for next year, before the budget is sent to the Board of Aldermen.

There is going to be an Emergency Vaccination Drill in Milford on April 19. They will be looking for volunteers to act as victims. Michelle Duprey encouraged Commissioners to inform as many people with disabilities to participate in this drill as she feels the State is not prepared to deal with persons with disabilities, particularly those who require alternate forms of communication. Marjorie Eichler asked if children could volunteer for the event. Michelle Duprey responded that she did not know and would inquire, however, generally speaking

minors would be the responsibility of their legal guardians and therefore that may negate the State's responsibility during such an event.

Elaine Quinn inquired about some background information regarding Joe Stanford who has agreed to be a representative on the New Haven Emergency Preparedness Committee. Michelle Duprey gave some background information about Joe Stanford to Elaine Quinn. A letter has gone out to the Emergency Preparedness Committee regarding Joe Stanford.

Old Business

- HUD Issue

Linda Reeder had sent a letter that went to Chris Laux, State Building Code Inspector which was attached to a packet she passed out at the meeting. Chris Laux's letter of response said that if the new construction is a multi family housing unit with an elevator or is on the ground floor then 10% of the units must be wheelchair accessible. Linda Reeder had received a letter from HUD which stated that according to Federal HUD regulations, only 5% accessible units were required, unless there was evidence of a need for a higher percentage. Linda Reeder distributed a draft response letter to HUD. The draft letter to HUD was reviewed by the Commission. After much discussion, it was decided that some data to support the Commission's position should be added, but the emphasis should remain on the legal requirements of HUD to comply with State Building Codes. Furthermore, it was advised that a summary action statement be included. A motion was made by Elaine Quinn and seconded by Chris Getlein to approve the letter as amended. The motion was unanimously approved.

(At this point, Dana Canevari chaired the meeting)

- Handicapped Parking

Stan Kontogiannis sent out a FOI letter requesting information from CT Department of Motor Vehicles which has now been forwarded to DMV's Legal Department. He noted he had obtained similar information from the MA DMV within 10 minutes of request. There was some discussion regarding the cameras obtained in Naugatuck, CT by their Disability Commissioners.

- Affordable Housing

Wendy Clark is the contact person to discuss the loss of the contract for an affordable-housing building on the Ninth Square. Some discussion ensued on this issue, whereby it was agreed that Michelle Duprey will invite Wendy Clark to the next Commission meeting in May.

- Support for MS Pilot project.

David Hicks distributed information regarding the MS Pilot Project which is in the Appropriations Committee. Although the amount of dollars requested was not included, the general consensus was this initiative should receive the support of the Commission. It was agreed that David Hicks would draft a letter and send it to Commissioners for feedback and then mail it to Susan Raimondo at the MS Society. A motion was made to support this pilot project, seconded, and the motion carried.

- Emergency Preparedness Committee

As noted above, Joe Stanford has been appointed by the Commission to serve on the Emergency Preparedness Committee and a letter to that effect has been sent.

- Invite to the Executive Director of HANH

It was decided to invite Jimmie Miller, Executive Director of HANH, to a Commission meeting towards the end of the summer.

- Commission information on the Website

This issue was tabled since the most recent draft was not available for review at the meeting.

- Legislative initiatives

At the last meeting, information was distributed regarding various legislative bills, for review by the Commissioners. There was discussion about these initiatives.

Governor Rell's car tax reform proposal was brought up. On that topic it was decided that David Hicks would send an individual letter to the Editor of the New Haven Register. The letter will serve to alert people with adapted vehicles on the ramifications of the Governor Rell's car tax proposal.

Other

Robin Tousey-Ayers reported on an ongoing issue, from previous meetings, concerning the parent of the child who attends Hooker School. The parent had a dilemma obtaining a reasonable accommodation for her child, and expressed her willingness to share her story with the Commission. She will be invited to attend the June meeting.

Robin Tousey-Ayers reported on the "ABLE LIVES" television series, which will premiere on CPTV on April 27th at 9PM. "Able Lives: Redefining People Living with Disabilities" is a new television series about recognizing uniqueness while acknowledging the need to make the world accessible to all.

St. Francis Home for Children is being subjected to law suits filed by the neighbors. Robin Tousey-Ayers reported the issue has been or will be before the New Haven Board of Zoning and thinks the Commission needs to keep track of this item, so that a resource for children with disabilities will not be lost.

There was a motion to adjourn by Stan Kontogiannis, seconded by David Hicks and unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned.