



COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES
CITY OF NEW HAVEN
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JOHN DeSTEFANO, JR.
Mayor

DAVID HICKS
Chairperson

Commission on Disabilities Minutes
December 11, 2006

Present: Dana Canevari, David Hicks, Matthew Ranelli, Linda Reeder,
Robin Tousey-Ayers, Heiwa Salovitz

Absent: Maria Elena Alvarez, Marjorie Eichler, Chris Getlein, Elaine Quinn,
Stan Kontogiannis

Staff: Michelle Duprey

David Hicks opened the meeting and a quorum was established. Minutes for November were reviewed and some corrections were noted. There was a motion to accept the minutes as corrected, made by Robin Tousey Ayers and seconded by Dana Canevari. The motion was unanimously approved.

August Minutes were reviewed with the changes suggested by Matthew Ranelli. They were revised to more accurately reflect the discussion that took place at the meeting. Linda Reeder made a motion to accept the minutes as amended and it was seconded. Dana Canevari and Heiwa Salovitz abstained. The motion was approved.

(Because of time constraints, the agenda for the meeting was altered.)

Old Business

Disability Parking

David Hicks distributed a draft of a letter to go to state legislators aimed at improving the current laws regarding handicapped parking. The Commissioners reviewed the letter. David Hicks gave some background information on development of the letter, and said that because the legislative session is coming up shortly, he felt it was necessary to get the letter approved expeditiously. He described his discussions with State Representative Robert Megna's office prior to drafting the letter. The Commissioners discussed possible changes to the letter as well as the overall issue. Two current regulations that can potentially result in abuse of privileges are 1) lifetime eligibility and 2) lack of oversight regarding use of placards. One suggestion the letter proposes is having identity photos on the placards.

There was additional discussion and comments about the draft as well as developing contacts with other disability organizations and groups that would be interested in

supporting the legislation. It was decided to hold off on contacting other organizations until a bill number was assigned to the proposed legislation.

The Office of Legislative Research will be producing a report on this issue and David Hicks drafted some questions for the research. There was some discussion between Matt Ranelli and David Hicks about the questions that were included for research. Minor changes to the questions were agreed on. Discussion continued about getting support for the bill, timelines and proceedings.

A motion was made by Linda Reeder to accept the drafted letter as amended, which was seconded by Dana Canevari and unanimously approved.

Housing

Linda Reeder reviewed the history of previous correspondence with the Housing Authority of the City of New Haven (HANH) and to the State office of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). She shared the response the Commission received from HANH. They acknowledge their legal responsibility to be in compliance with State Building Code, including the requirement that ten percent of multi-family units be accessible. The Commission decided they might take further action with HUD after receiving a written response from them, which at this point they had not received.

Matt Ranelli suggested requesting a meeting with the Mayor before approaching HANH with questions regarding implementation of the State Building Code. After some discussion it was decided to hold off on any further action until HUD replied to the Commissions' letter which has been received via certified mail.

After some discussion, David Hicks moved that Linda Reeder write a letter for review at the next meeting, taking all comments into consideration, to follow up with HANH regarding implementation of the ten percent accessibility requirements as stated in the State Building Code. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

Board of Education

At the last meeting, a discussion took place regarding lay-offs in the New Haven School system of paraprofessionals who failed an exam required by the No Child Left Behind Act. Many of these paraprofessionals were providing support for children with disabilities within the school system. Recently there was an article about the issue in the *New Haven Register* as some parents have begun to organize around the concern. Robin Tousey Ayers reported there is a meeting scheduled with the Board of Education (BOE) to figure out how to get the paraprofessionals back working. She reported on the statements made by Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Mayo.

The next step from the Commission's standpoint might be to have their own discussion about what has happened. Linda Reeder brought up the issue of pursuing who is the school district's ADA Coordinator and Matt Ranelli stated that it would be useful to identify who the ADA Coordinator for the BOE is and have them come to a Commission meeting. The idea of holding a public hearing was suggested by David Hicks. The Commission discussed this option but decided instead to first pursue this issue at a regular meeting. Robin Tousey Ayers will write a letter to Robin Golden (as it is understood that Robin Golden is the ADA Coordinator) and invite her to a meeting at her convenience (sending a copy to Dr. Mayo).

There was a motion to adjourn the meeting by Linda Reeder, which was seconded by Dana Canevari and unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned.