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MARIA ELENA ALVAREZ
Chairperson

Commission on Disabilities Minutes
February 13, 2006

Present: Maria Elena Alvarez, Dana Canevari, Marjorie Eichler, Chris Getlein, David Hicks, Stan Kontogiannis, Elaine Quinn, Linda Reeder

Absent: Robin Tousey-Ayers, Matthew Ranelli

Staff: Michelle Duprey

Maria Elena Alvarez opened the meeting. The minutes for January 2006 were reviewed. A motion was made by Elaine Quinn and seconded by Chris Geitlein to accept the minutes as corrected. A vote was taken. Dana Canevari abstained, and all other votes were in favor. The motion passed.

Chairman's Report

Maria Elena Alvarez talked about an e-mail that went out regarding the Moving to Work Program through Housing Authorities. She said it may be discussed at the next meeting.

A woman named Joan had called the Department to complain about the sidewalks in Fair Haven and wanted to know what the Commission on Disabilities does. Maria Elena called her back and offered that she could come to the next Commission meeting (today's). She did not attend this meeting.

Department Report

The City of New Haven's website is up and has several improvements including emergency preparedness for persons with disabilities.

Michelle reported she was a guest on Marrakech Express, a public television show. It is her third show as a guest. She does not know when it will air, but it is about quality of life issues for persons with disabilities.

The Department has not received any news regarding the Accessible America Award, but hopes to hear soon whether the Department was selected as one of the three winners.

All constituents within a certain zip code in New Haven were sent a voluntary Special Needs questionnaire. The survey will eventually be sent to everyone in the city. Commissioners asked questions about the survey. The Emergency Operations Center is sorting the incoming informational responses.

The Department will be sending out another edition of the “Real Choices in New Haven” newsletter in the near future.

Michelle wanted to remind the Commission that Disability Awareness Day is July 26th and if they were going to be sponsoring an event, they may want to talk about it in the upcoming meeting.

Old Business

Letter to HUD

Linda Reeder, Chair of the Housing sub- committee, drafted a letter and it was passed out. The letter requests that HUD require 10% of the new housing units in HUD funded housing to be wheelchair accessible in order to comply with State Building Codes. Michelle suggested including a copy of the letter to the Mayor as well.

David Hicks suggested adding some data to the letter. After some discussion, it was decided not to add data at this juncture. David Hicks made a motion to accept the letter with the discussed revisions, which was seconded by Dana Canevari. The motion was unanimously approved.

Accessible Parking

Stan Kontogiannis reported on his progress with this issue and updated the Commission. He has met with several people and as well spoke with Philip Ball, whose litigation against the city is pending. On January 25th there is supposed to be a hearing on this issue. He said he will summarize his findings and report back at the next Commission meeting.

Michelle Duprey suggested he may want to request information from DMV under the Freedom of Information Act. She thought it might be revealing to inquire about such information such as the number of applications received, the number which were granted and number denied, and for what reasons. Michelle suggested Stan make similar requests from Massachusetts DMV as well, for comparison purposes. There is federal guidance on handicapped parking which should also be looked into. There was more discussion of other issues surrounding handicapped parking.

Affordable Housing

Elaine Quinn read a statement from the New Haven Register regarding the housing development on the Crown Street block. She suggested that the Commission may want to meet with a representative from the City’s Economic Development Department in May regarding the need for affordable housing.

Legislative Agenda

Michelle Duprey distributed the legislative agenda developed by the Office of Protection and Advocacy. She is still waiting to hear from the MS Society for their Legislative Bill number.

Elaine Quinn talked about the bills that NAMI is working on. She also talked about the Legislative panel that met in Milford on mixing populations within subsidized housing, informing the Commission of her favorable impressions of this meeting.

New Business

Special Needs Committee

Michelle Duprey said the Commission needs to select someone to be a representative on the Emergency Preparedness Committee. Maria Elena Alvarez asked if anyone wanted to volunteer from the Commission or if they knew someone. It was decided to defer this issue until the next meeting.

Web site

The Commission would like to put a description of what it is and does, as well as a list of scheduled meetings, on the Department's web page. This was suggested by Linda Reeder and was voted on. The motion was unanimously approved. There was a discussion about the lack of timeliness of some of the website information, including the comment that the list of Commissioners needs to be updated. The Commissioners expressed their desire to put their brochure on the website.

Special Needs Survey Question

Elaine Quinn asked a question regarding the Special Needs Survey, previously discussed at this meeting, and whether the Commission wanted to be on record as to the terminology of the survey. There was a motion to write a letter about the wording on the form. For discussion, Elaine Quinn asked what the intent of the letter would be, as it could not change the survey. After further discussion Elaine Quinn restated the motion, suggesting that such a letter from the Commission be coordinated with the suggestion of a person by the Commission for the Emergency Preparedness Committee. David Hicks seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved. Linda Reeder volunteered to draft the letter, with input from other Committee members.

Announcements

On March 9th, at Fellowship Place, there will be a presentation and fundraiser, titled, "Two Sisters". Tickets are \$75.00

Other Business

(It is now 7:00 pm). Maria Elena Alvarez made a motion to suspend the rest of the agenda. Dana Canevari seconded the motion which was unanimously approved. There was a motion to adjourn, which was seconded and the meeting was adjourned.