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MARIA ELENA ALVAREZ
Chairperson

Commission on Disabilities Minutes
January 9, 2006

Present: Maria Elena Alvarez, Robin Tousey-Ayers, David Hicks, Stan Kontogiannis, Elaine Quinn, Linda Reeder, Matthew Ranelli

Absent: Dana Canevari, Chris Getlein, Marjorie Eichler

Staff: Michelle Duprey

Maria Elena Alvarez opened the meeting. The minutes for December 2005 were reviewed. A motion was made by David Hicks and seconded by Elaine Quinn to approve the minutes as written. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Chairman's Report

Maria Elena passed around a resource guide that came from Yale New Haven Hospital.

Department Report

Michelle Duprey passed out the article on Accessible America that was published in the New Haven Register. Most of the Commissioners had read the original article. The Department was selected as one of the ten finalists for this national competition, which will award cash prizes for first, second and third place. It is uncertain when the winners will be announced.

She also announced that the Department has won a national award from the MS Society, for employer of the year (over 100 employees category) and is now awaiting the official notification and details of its presentation.

The annual Department budget was submitted, with zero increase from last year's amended budget. The Departments annual budget is about \$118,000.00.

The City is sending out a form to one zip code only. The form is "Special Needs Population Voluntary Registration". It is being sent out as part of the emergency planning (see enclosed).

Michelle Duprey has been working on employee accommodations. Kristin Barber designed a brochure on accessible transportation.

Old Business

Linda Reeder said she would draft a letter to HANH regarding HUD requirements for the number of required accessible units in New Haven subsidized housing. The Commission will seek the same (10%) as mandated by the state building codes. (See December minutes.) There were further comments regarding HANH.

Stan Kontogiannis researched the issue of accessible parking permits and residential signage, which was originally triggered by an article in the New Haven Register (see enclosed). He met with the former Director of Parking and Traffic, Brian McGrath, at the end of December. Stan will also be meeting with others in February on this topic.

Brian McGrath was of the opinion that DMV readily gives out permits with no criteria other than doctors' signatures. There is no retrieval system and as a result the permits are abused. For example, permits remain in the possession of family members after the death of a permit holder. As for parking meters, he stated that specialized blue meters which have 12 hours of parking, are abused as well. People will put in 25 cents and park all day. Both the City and individuals who need designated parking are hurt as a result of this lax system.

Residential designated parking signs are also problematic, as people apply for them, but anyone with a permit can use them. This often results in altercations and complaints.

Brian McGrath felt there is very little police enforcement for metered parking and thought the police were not adequately trained on this matter. Michelle said she does get calls from police requesting the special number to verify permit use.

Discussion ensued on the topic and the application process; various ideas were offered about how to prevent abuse.

New Business

The MS Society would like the Commission to write the Governor in support of a pilot program, which would mirror the CT Home Care Program. The pilot program would be for persons with physical disabilities aged 18-64. After much discussion it was decided to wait until the legislation was drafted, so the language of the bill could be scrutinized, before a letter of support was generated. The funds would be administered by DSS in collaboration with the MS Society. The funds would serve approximately 50 persons. It was decided to place this item on the agenda for the February meeting.

Other Business

Elaine Quinn brought up an article published in the New Haven Register about the development of luxury condos at Ninth Square. She expressed concern about the lack of affordable housing and the downtown area was becoming gentrified. Elaine Quinn

said she was disappointed our officials do not understand the need for affordable units. Matt Ranelli volunteered to speak to officials in City Planning to see how the Commission could contribute to the conversation about these developments. Matt Ranelli will report back at the next meeting.

There was a general discussion on forming a sub-committee on Legislative issues. After much discussion, it was decided that Michelle Duprey would contact the Office of Protection and Advocacy, to see what the legislative agenda was and bring these to the attention of the Commission. It was also suggested that whenever possible, bills for consideration would be sent out with the minutes when feasible, so they could be reviewed before the meeting.

Announcements

There were no announcements.

The meeting was adjourned.