



JOHN DeSTEFANO, JR.
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



MARIA ELENA ALVAREZ
Chairperson

Commission on Disabilities Minutes
June 12, 2006

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

Absent: Dana Canevari, Chris Getlein, Stan Kontogiannis

Staff: Michelle Duprey

Maria Elena Alvarez opened the meeting. Minutes for the month of May were reviewed. David Hicks moved to accept the minutes as written, which was seconded and unanimously approved.

Chairman's Report

Maria Elena Alvarez distributed an agenda for an upcoming Housing Resources Forum to be held on June 16 at City Hall. Elaine Quinn commented about the Forum she attended in 2003. The presentations are for a target audience of case managers and social workers in the New Haven area.

Funding which was allocated for the MS Foundation was discussed. Michelle Duprey mentioned an upcoming event related to the funds.

Elaine Quinn brought an article from the New Haven Register announcing that the Department for Services with Disabilities was awarded national recognition for Employer of the Year by the MS Foundation.

Department Report

Michelle Duprey reported that she had met with Marc Gallucci, Executive Director of the Center for Disability Rights. The Department will be partnering with the Center, sponsoring an event on July 26th on Disability Awareness. Anyone interested in working with Michelle Duprey on the event should contact her.

Michelle Duprey met with a representative from the Office of Protection and Advocacy regarding Emergency Preparedness. Michelle's recommendation was that the state needed to appoint someone whose sole responsibility was to provide input and planning for people with disabilities. She also shared a recent policy statement issued by The Red Cross, asserting that it cannot serve people with disabilities, as well as the response from OPA to The Red Cross.

Michelle Duprey went to a meeting held by the Office of the State Child Advocate whereby "untold stories" of children with disabilities within the DCF system were discussed. There was discussion about DCF and foster care for children with disabilities. Marjorie Eichler shared some of her experiences with the group regarding DCF and her children with disabilities.

Elaine Quinn brought up the fact that Hannah Kristan, for whom Hannah's Dream Playground is named, is now 18 years old and could be on the Commission. Michelle Duprey offered to call her to possibly recruit her for the Commission.

Matt Ranelli mentioned that he recently successfully advocated that Hooker School put a metal slide in their new playground, because the plastic ones create audio interference for children with hearing impairments.

Old Business

Linda Reeder reviewed a letter she received from HUD regarding the state building code. The letter explained that The Housing Authority of New Haven will be going through a Section 504 compliance review and the results may impact the number of wheelchair accessible units. The letter stated the Commission would receive a copy of the results. Linda Reeder said she has concerns that they still are not meeting the state building code requirements. She had drafted a letter in response to HUD, but it was decided to invite the Executive Director of HANH, Jimmy Miller to the August meeting, and discuss the issue then, rather than send the drafted letter at this time.

David Hicks shared his revised draft of the information on the Commission that is to be posted on the City website. There were a few more suggestions.

Announcement

Elaine Quinn announced that Keep the Promise Coalition will be sponsoring training on how to impact the State Legislature.

New Business

Robin Tousey-Ayers and Marjorie Eichler will serve as the Commission's Nomination Committee.

Robin Tousey-Ayers said that Karla O'Brian, who was a guest at the last meeting, found that attending the meeting and discussing her daughter's situation was very helpful, and she expressed her gratitude to the Commission. Robin Tousey-Ayers and Matt Ranelli agreed to draft a letter to the Board of Education concerning the issues involved with students' disabilities. There was further discussion about this issue.

Robin Tousey-Ayers began a discussion about the Rails to Trails which is going to finish at Hillhouse Avenue. The Commission members are invited to the opening of the trail. The organizers are concerned with accessibility and would like to attend a Commission meeting.

Linda Reeder attended a CT Employment Summit. She said that Bureau of Rehabilitation Services has been awarded a large federal grant to improve the employment infrastructure for people with disabilities.

Elaine Quinn offered some information about some creative solutions to affordable housing which have been implemented in the City of Seattle.

Other business

Marjorie Eichler said she and her children attended a drumming workshop led by Elaine Kolb, for Leeway, at the International Arts and Ideas festival on the green.

Elaine Quinn moved to adjourn, which was seconded by David Hicks and approved. The meeting adjourned.