



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

Promoting
 **Accessibility**
In New Haven

DAVID HICKS
Chairperson

Approved

Commission on Disabilities Minutes
March 8, 2010

Present: Dana Canevari, David Hicks, Stan Kontogiannis, Elaine Quinn,
Matthew Ranelli, Heiwa Salovitz, RobinTousey-Ayers

Absent: Linda Reeder, Chris Getlein

Staff: Michelle Duprey

Guest: Katlin Ainsworth

The meeting was brought to order. Minutes were reviewed for February. Stan Kontogiannis moved to accept the minutes as written. Dana Canevari seconded the motion. Elaine Quinn and Heiwa Salovitz abstained from voting. The motion was unanimously approved.

Chairman's Report

David Hicks reported he sent an e-mail to Nikkia Grant at DMV asking whether they have started to produce and distribute handicapped parking placards with expiration dates. After a follow up e-mail to her, he found out that placards with expiration dates are now coming out (in March, not January, 2010).

David Hicks talked about a bill Michelle Duprey sent him that originated in the Transportation Committee regarding a pilot program in three different-sized Connecticut municipalities that would use volunteers to enforce Disability Parking. He thought the bill looked fine and he will lobby to see if New Haven could be the largest of the municipalities, if the bill is passed.

David Hicks talked about the idea about a panel discussion for the ADA celebration, as carry over from the last meeting. He said after thinking about it further he felt there were problems, for example the timing of inviting someone from Transportation at the same time as they are writing a bill, or the fact that both the Governor and possibly the DMV Commissioner would not be serving in their posts next year. He also said he wondered if an issue with such a narrow focus rose to the level of warranting a panel discussion.

Elaine Quinn commented that Linda Reeder had sent an e-mail to the Commission (as she could not attend the meeting) expressing strong feelings against a panel discussion. Linda Reeder thought it would be too big a project to undertake, and that the Commission could accomplish more by writing to and speaking with other groups and agencies to seek agreement on issues the Commission is advocating.

Michelle Duprey talked about some ideas for a panel discussion such as reflecting on the past 20 years of progress related to the passage of the ADA. Michelle Duprey stated that in the past, the Department has had panel discussions with about 40 people in attendance. The topics were about employment under the ADA. There was some discussion about additional ideas. Michelle Duprey stated that there is also a statewide celebration, and New Haven is probably not going to do well with being in competition for the same audience.

Dana Canevari talked extensively about a performance she attended in New York, called "The Diagnosis of a Faun". She proposed seeing if it would be feasible to bring this performance to New Haven and thought it would be a different angle for the 20th Anniversary of the ADA. There was much discussion about the pros and cons of the proposal. It was agreed that Dana Canevari would make contact with the production company and perhaps it would be viable for another event other than the anniversary of the ADA

There were several other ideas tossed out for consideration including a panel discussion by people with disabilities on how they feel they are being treated. Another idea from Michelle Duprey was to invite people from Arts and Ideas and perhaps The New Haven Ballet, as well as others with an interest in the issue of how the arts relate to and depict people with disabilities.

There was further discussion about whether there was a video available from the Arts and Ideas event that Dana Canevari and Heiwa Salovitz participated in. There was also an idea about taking artistic events relating to the ADA into the schools for children and Michelle Duprey explained that most children with disabilities don't know that they have a disability to begin with. This became apparent during the Youth at Work training on Reasonable Accommodations that the Department sponsored under the Connect-Ability Grant. There was further discussion but no concrete plans were developed.

David Hicks distributed part (3 pages) of the proposal within the City's budget that discussed combining Elderly and Disability Services. Michelle Duprey declined to provide an opinion stating it was too far down the road to discuss and she did not have any feelings about it either way at this point.

David Hicks felt it would not end up being a good thing for people with disabilities and did not feel that it would be beneficial to the Department or for the Commission, as a result. He said that he was planning on attending the public meeting regarding the budget the following evening. Heiwa Salovitz agreed with David Hicks, stating he did not feel it would be to the benefit of the constituency and the Department to merge these two Departments. He said "there are some minor commonalities between the two groups but people who are elderly don't and

won't identify themselves as having a disability. There has always been a feud and it's not a good fit “.

Dana Canevari agreed as well. Stan Kontogiannis questioned what Elderly Services take was on this proposed merger. Michelle Duprey responded that “we don't know what it's going to look like and the budget is fully funded as requested by the Department for 2010-2011.” She felt there was some administrative overlap but not service overlap. Michelle Duprey went on to say that in the past she may have expressed interest in such a merger because of the disparity in the numbers of staff between Elderly Services and the Department, though now that point was moot because Elderly Services has a smaller staff than at that time. There were additional questions from Elaine Quinn and Robin Tousey Ayers. Elaine Quinn commented that the proposal they are suggesting includes looking at some ways to cut funds/ get some funds by writing grants. There has been no discussion about cutting staff, Michelle Duprey responded. Stan Kontogiannis stated that the Department was already “at the bone right now, and that's what it looks like they're trying to cut.” Elaine Quinn questioned whether they might try to push disability under Community Services Administration. Michelle Duprey stated that the Department was on the edge of CSA only it came under Corporation Counsel because of Michelle Duprey's background in the ADA.

David Hicks asked about the Commission on Aging and how it came to be that they have no public minutes or agendas on the City's website. Michelle Duprey had no answers.

Robin Tousey Ayers stated “we need to know more, so that the population that we serve is protected”. David Hicks said he spoke to his alderwoman and it going to go to the hearing to find out more, saying that “It's a proposal within their own budget, and they (the Commission) do need to know what they are planning to do.”

Department Report

Michelle Duprey said that the budget reflects what she requested. She does not know when she is to present her budget to the Board of Aldermen.

Michelle Duprey serves on the Long Term Care Committee. She has made plans for someone from the Commission on Aging to come to talk to the Commission about “*money follows the person*” and other community supports. Michelle Duprey said that she would forward a report to the Commission before the presentation.

Elaine Quinn stated that community based care has been involved in Mental Health and there is more talk than action. There was a discussion about the closing of the psychiatric hospitals in CT and about nursing home closures. Elaine Quinn talked about the “housing first” philosophy supported by HUD for persons with chronic mental illness and substance abuse.

Old Business

COD Website update: Michelle Duprey took pictures of the Commissioners who were present at the meeting for the website.

Film Series-

Jason Gomez made a call to Chapel Haven but got no response. Dana Canevari reported that she sent them an e-mail but doesn't know what their response is. Stan Kontogiannis said that Chris Getlein was going to ask. Stan Kontogiannis said he will send Mike (at Chapel Haven) an e-mail.

Robin Tousey Ayers remarked about a film series of old classic movies at the public Library and proposed they suggest showing an old classic involving disabilities. There was discussion about what old movies might be shown.

ADA Anniversary Planning-

Dana Canevari is looking into something as previously discussed within these minutes. It was decided that if there was going to be a panel discussion, there needed to be a solid idea.

New Business

There was no new business or other business

Announcements and Public Comment

Katlin Ainsworth, who is a Yale Law student doing an internship under Corporation Counsel was present at the meeting by invitation of Michelle Duprey. She wanted to know what the major challenges are facing people with disabilities in New Haven. The issue of housing came up first. Dana Canevari stated that it was hard to get a job interview and a job when you can't drive. She went on to say that employers are not thinking about hiring someone with a disability.

David Hicks mentioned the responsibility of the city's businesses to be accessible. Heiwa Salovitz said that businesses don't want you in their stores, especially if there are narrow aisles.

Dana Canevari talked about her experiences with the lack of public accommodations at events recently held in book stores and her feeling that proprietors in these cases expect you to leave rather than that you should stay and that they should provide reasonable accommodation.

Katlin Ainsworth asked about specifics within housing. Heiwa Salovitz talked about his recent experience in housing where a unit was claimed to be accessible but did not have any grab bars and he was told he could put them in himself and would have to pay for them. (This was new construction and should have had grab bars available).

The discussion turned to the new residential construction on State Street. Commissioners wondered how many accessible units have been planned and if they will be truly accessible.

Dana Canevari made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Heiwa Salovitz. The meeting adjourned.