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DAVID HICKS
Chairperson

APPROVED

Commission on Disabilities Minutes
March 9, 2009

Present: Dana Canevari, Chris Getlein, David Hicks, Stan Kontogiannis, Elaine Quinn, Matthew Ranelli, Linda Reeder, Heiwa Salovitz, Robin Tousey-Ayers

Absent: N/A

Staff: Michelle Duprey, Kristin Barber

The meeting came to order and a quorum was established. The minutes for February were amended by Chris Getlein. Heiwa Salovitz moved to accept the minutes as amended, and Dana Canevari seconded. Elaine Quinn abstained. The motion carried.

Kristin Barber from the Department reported on the progress of the accessible cabs. She said the proposal for the accessible cabs has been approved as written and will be brought up at the next meeting at the South Central Council of Governments (SCRCOG). The voucher program (which is now a separate proposal) still needs some clarification and will be submitted once questions regarding eligibility of the matching funds are resolved.

She also brought Bill 1093 to the attention of the Commission members in case they wanted to support it. The Bill is to restore funds that go to the cities for transportation for persons with disabilities and the elderly. Michelle Duprey and David Hicks will be testifying before the Transportation Committee on Wednesday and will provide testimony on this bill.

There was also a brief discussion about the bill that Bill Scalzi from Metro Taxi has been working on in order to change the language in the DOT regulations regarding types of vehicles that can be used for accessible cabs. If appropriate, Kristin Barber will give information to David Hicks and Michelle Duprey so they can provide support for that Bill as well as needed. (Kristin Barber left the meeting at this point).

There was a motion to have David Hicks on behalf of the Commission testify in support of these two or possibly three Bills. Heiwa Salovitz made the motion and Chris Getlein seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Chairman's Report

Handicapped Parking Placard

David Hicks talked about the Handicapped Placard Bill that was raised again this year. The Bill is number 444. He said the bill looks like the one from last year and he is concerned about the fiscal

note that may be attached to it at a later phase, which would severely limit its chances of being passed because of the current budget.

Disabilities Planning Committee

David Hicks recently met with the Building Performance and Regulations Committee of the Connecticut chapter of the American Institute of Architects. At this meeting he discussed with the committee the presentation they have developed concerning accessibility to present to businesses. He will write a letter to the Chamber of Commerce of New Haven to initiate bringing the presentation to a full membership meeting. He will pass the draft letter by other Commissioners before it goes out.

Department Report

The Department has a grant called Connect-Ability, a local level pilot project. A consultant, Theresa Nadeau, started last week. She was hired to implement the Strategic Plan of the grant. Michelle Duprey stated that she will ask her to attend the June meeting of the Commission to report on her activities.

Michelle Duprey sent out e-mails about the National Accessible America award. The Department is a finalist in the competition for the fourth year in a row.

Michelle Duprey attended a workshop sponsored by the State Department of Public Health. The event concerned emergency planning for people with disabilities. She said she was disappointed in the lack of accessibility at the event. There was some discussion whether to follow up with a letter regarding this oversight.

As an aside, Elaine Quinn brought up the issue of getting very short notice regarding a meeting at the New Haven Housing Authority. She wanted to know if anyone else got the notice and if anyone was going. (There is further discussion regarding this issue under old business).

Old Business

Website update

Stan Kontogiannis said he had looked at the current website and has some suggestions to make. There was some discussion around his suggestions but David Hicks stated it would be easier for all to follow the discussion and any proposed changes if the material, both the old and the proposed changes, were available in writing to compare and consider. Stan Kontogiannis said he would bring a comparison to the next meeting.

ADA Celebration in July

Michelle Duprey stated she recently met with some organizers of the International Festival of Arts and Ideas and shared her ideas about having some modified accessible vehicles as part of the festival on the Green this year. Commission members agreed this would likely bring a bigger audience than a separate event in July. Michelle Duprey said she would follow up with them. There was more discussion about this topic.

Housing Authority of the City of New Haven

Heiwa Salovitz brought up the issue of information that was asked of HANH representatives at a meeting last fall. As he recalls, the Commission wanted to know how many people without disabilities are currently in a unit that is wheelchair accessible. Michelle Duprey had the information for another reason and stated that five units as of January 25th, 2009 were currently being occupied by people who did not need a wheelchair accessible unit. Heiwa Salovitz stated that he thought the Commission ought to keep a fair amount of pressure on HANH. There was discussion on ways to have an impact

on this issue. No one approach was selected, however it was decided that the Housing Committee members should review the Voluntary Compliance Order that HANH is currently under and see if they are in compliance with that Order. If they are not, then they may choose to notify HUD. The members of the Housing Committee agreed to review the document and meet before the next Commission meeting to discuss an approach to the issue.

My Ride (Paratransit)

Stan Kontogiannis reminded the Commission that in October 2007 at Miller Library, our ad-hoc Transportation Committee met with Brandon Foster and Alan Naudus of the Greater New Haven Transit District. Several issues of concern were raised at that meeting regarding My Ride. Stan Kontogiannis suggested the Commission invite them to a Commission meeting to follow up. All Commissioners were in agreement to invite them to the next meeting if their scheduled allowed.

New Business

Robin Tousey Ayers informed the Commission about the Shared Ability Dance Workshops that the Department had initiated with Noble Barker of the New Haven Ballet. There will be two workshops scheduled. One in April and May and then it will culminate in a performance at the Shubert Theatre in June. The workshop participants will be between ages 12-20, with and without disabilities. She said she will be sharing the information with others.

Dana Canevari made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Chris Getlein, and was unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned.