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DAVID HICKS
Chairperson

Commission on Disabilities Minutes
November 13, 2006

Present: Maria Elena Alvarez, Dana Canevari, Marjorie Eichler, Chris Getlein, David Hicks, Linda Reeder, Matthew Ranelli, Robin Tousey-Ayers, Heiwa Salovitz

Absent: Stan Kontogiannis, Elaine Quinn

Staff: Michelle Duprey

Maria Elena Alvarez opened the meeting. A quorum was established.

The minutes for August and September were reviewed. Discussion on the August minutes was postponed pending clarification by Matt Ranelli, who had not yet arrived. The August minutes were tabled.

Dana Canevari made a motion for the September minutes to be accepted as written. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

Chairman's Report

Trees of Hope

It was unanimously decided there was insufficient time to prepare for this event. Maria Elena Alvarez agreed to write a letter explaining that the Commission would not participate in this year's event and asking that the request for participation be sent earlier in the future.

Maria Elena Alvarez announced that she will be moving to New York because of her family commitments.

Department Report

Michelle Duprey announced that the Department submitted an Accessible America Award application for 2006. The Department placed eighth last year. The winners will be announced in December.

In December the Department will also find out if the grant that was submitted to the Long Island Sound License Plate Program, through DEP, will be funded.

Michelle Duprey told the Commission she received a call today from a constituent complaining about Handicapped Parking and vouchers. The complaint was in regard to persons having to pay for the parking as they are on a fixed income. She stated the Commission was very interested in this topic and the constituent may contact the Commission about this issue.

David Hicks requested a copy of the application to the Accessible America Award. Michelle will send it to him.

Michelle Duprey stated she has updated the Department's website and suggested Commissioners look at the revised web site and give additional suggestions if so inclined.

Old Business

Housing Issues

Linda Reeder brought up the follow up that was to occur after Jimmy Miller, Executive Director of the Housing Authority of New Haven (HANH), spoke at the August 2006 meeting. Mr. Miller stated at that meeting that he would check with his Legal Department regarding whether HANH had to comply with the state building code requirement of 10 percent wheelchair accessible units in new construction. Linda Reeder shared a draft letter with the Commission that is to be sent to the Legal Department at HANH asking for a determination on that issue.

She also distributed a draft letter to Hartford office of HUD which first, inquired about the outcome of the Rehab Act 504 Review report that was conducted at the HANH and was to be completed in September; and second, that asked HUD to respond to previous correspondence, including a supporting letter from the State Building Inspector, stating that HUD must comply with state building codes for accessibility.

Matt Ranelli made some suggestions regarding each letter. David moved to accept the draft letter to the Legal Department as revised. The motion was seconded, and unanimously approved. David Hicks moved to send HUD letter as revised. This motion was seconded by Chris Getlein and unanimously approved.

Rails to Trails

Robin Tousey Ayers talked about Rails to Trails. She stated that she did not extend an invitation to the Executive Director and perhaps it is best to revisit the issue in the spring when exploring the Trail is more feasible.

Board of Education

Robin Tousey Ayers spoke to Robin Golden from the BOE who stated she is not the ADA Compliance Officer within the school system. Robin Golden said she would be happy to address the Commission but was not available on Mondays.

Michelle recommended the Commission inquire to Dr. Mayo as to who is the ADA Coordinator for the BOE. David Hicks asked if there is a requirement for that position; Michelle Duprey responded affirmatively.

Robin Tousey Ayers also informed the Commission about the recent termination by the BOE of 90 paraprofessionals. They were let go because they did not pass certification testing. Michelle Duprey stated she learned of this requirement which is a result of the "No Child Left Behind", Title 1 funding requirement. Michelle Duprey suggested the Commission may want to talk to the State Board of Education about this requirement.

Robin Tousey Ayers stated that many of the parents are upset by this decision as most of the paraprofessionals provided personal care to students with disabilities. There was further discussion. It was decided that Robin Tousey Ayers will draft a letter to Dr. Mayo regarding this issue and it will be placed on the agenda for next month.

New Business

There was a discussion regarding attendance and the importance of notification so that quorums can be established or Commissioners notified if the meeting is cancelled. David Hicks spoke about a conversation he had with Kris Barber about the process for reminding Commissioners. She will now be asking Commissioners to confirm their attendance rather than leaving a reminder notification. David stressed the importance of calling if not able to make the meeting.

2007 Schedule

The Commissioners were given a proposed meeting schedule for 2007. After review, there was a motion by Chris Getlein to accept the schedule which was seconded by Dana Canevari and unanimously approved.

Election of Officers

Nominations for the Executive Board were made. The slate consisted of David Hicks for Chairman, Dana Canevari for Vice Chairman, and Linda Reeder for Secretary. There was one ballot, in which Chris Getlein moved to accept, which was seconded and unanimously approved. Thanks were given to Maria Elena Alvarez and David Hicks gave a brief acceptance speech.

New Commissioner

Heiwa Salovitz is a new Commissioner. He addressed the group and introduced himself. He then spoke a bit about his experience voting this past Tuesday. There was a discussion of the new voting machines and the ability in some parts of Connecticut to phone in your vote.

Other Business

Heiwa Salovitz talked about the Lemon Law that exists for durable medical equipment. He explained some details of this law and explained that the Office of Protection and Advocacy is assisting people with this law.

Public Comments and Announcements

No items

There was a motion to adjourn which was seconded and unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned.