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**DAVID HICKS**  
*Chairperson*

APPROVED

**Commission on Disabilities Minutes**  
**November 9, 2009**

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

Absent: Elaine Quinn, Linda Reeder,

Staff: Michelle Duprey

Guest Presenter: Michael Piscitelli, Director of Transportation, Traffic and Parking for the City of New Haven

The meeting was called to order. Michael Piscitelli was introduced to the group. David Hicks had laryngitis so Stan Kontogiannis read a statement that David Hicks had prepared for the meeting. The statement essentially spoke to the legislative effort that the Commission has been engaged in for 4 years regarding the handicapped parking program in the State of Connecticut. He described the system that DMV is working on to link the placard to the license. This would allow for better enforcement for handicapped parking. David Hicks stated that Brian McGrath (Michael Piscitelli's predecessor) had a policy that photos would be sufficient for tickets and asked to continue the policy as they have a vested interest in enforcing the law.

He went on to say that while the New Haven police have access to the state's COLLECT/CATER database, the Department of Transportation, Traffic and Parking do not currently have access to it, and the Commission would be willing to work to change this. Enforcement of current law is hampered by the current placard system, but the new law should improve the enforcement situation, and the Commission would like to see more training and education on the issue, which should lead to better enforcement. This would also bring additional revenue to the City.

Michael Piscitelli responded to the statement by David Hicks and there was a brief discussion about the problem of local abuse of the parking placards. Michael Piscitelli asked for additional information about the legislation, which was given. He said that they have deputized people in the past, i.e. CT Transit writes tickets on behalf of the Department. He stated that he could do something to that effect.

Heiwa Salovitz stated that there is also a problem with cars blocking curb cuts or sidewalks. Michael Piscitelli stated that it would be best to call 946-8075, Monday through Friday and they would dispatch immediately in those cases. Michael Piscitelli stated in response to Michelle Duprey, that on week-ends they may dispatch depending on the problem.

There was discussion about getting access to the database that the police use. Michael Piscitelli stated it might work. David Hicks said they would have a license or photo ID which would be tied to the handicapped parking placard and that by 2016 the old system would be totally phased out and all old placards would be invalid at that time. The new system would be easier for the police to enforce. There was further discussion about the problem and Michael Piscitelli said that perhaps a media campaign about the change would be effective.

Michelle Duprey said that even when people reapply, DMV does not verify with physicians that sign off on the applications. She told the story about how her dermatologist signed her application and it was accepted. The DMV has stated that they are going to tighten up that aspect of the program as well.

Stan Kontogiannis asked a question in regard to the database based on the privacy issue, which Michael Piscitelli had brought up. Michael responded that there is a presumption of innocence and that everyone would need to be checked and that would lead to inevitable problems. David Hicks then went on to explain more about the abuse that is taking place. He said that a high percentage of the abuse comes from able-bodied people using placards of friends or family and recounted an example caught by a local TV reporter. He also explained that DMV has confirmed that twice as many placards have been issued than there are people with the requisite disabilities, by reliable estimates, not including the duplicate placards issued to individuals. The new system would be relying on the use of Drivers license or non driver ID to identify the individual with the placard. Stan Kontogiannis commented that university campus police are noticing massive abuse because there is no retrieval system. Dana Canevari told a story about how her placard was stolen when she was in New York. Michelle Duprey also shared an anecdote.

Michael Piscitelli said that it is best to call directly or to use "see click fix" website as it comes into his blackberry. He then went on to talk about the meetings that he has been having with Michelle Duprey's involvement about how to do a better job with the downtown parking situation. They are going to make vouchers more available and add information to the City's website regarding parking and the fine.

This comment then led to a discussion about the current fine for violators which is \$150.00 and the psychology behind having such a large fine. Stan Kontogiannis thought that enforcement will change attitudes, whereas Michael Piscitelli thought that because it was so high that police would be reluctant to ticket. At any rate, he said he would take this information back to his officers. David Hicks stated that as the new system is phased in, enforcement will be easier and that increased efforts by traffic and police officers would make a big difference.

Michelle Duprey talked about the State statute ordinance regarding her efforts to have the language clearer regarding people with disabilities' responsibility to pay for parking at meters that are designated handicapped.

Matt Ranelli made comment that there was a change to the public act which added back in the legislative language as an amendment, the capacity of nurses and other non-physicians to authorize people who request handicapped parking placards.

Michael Piscitelli said that he remembered a conversation with Commissioner Ward, and the database. Police have access to all of the data. Traffic and Parking are provided only a subset of data and they only have the plate information. Matt Ranelli suggested giving the Traffic Authority the subset information saying "We want you to be able to punch in

placard information when it gets done". There was a suggestion about having a bar code on the card. Members talked about the problems with this. David Hicks pointed out that the new law already provided sufficient identification opportunity, from the placard to the license. Michelle explained that it's matched with the placard, not the vehicle. Michael Piscitelli liked the idea of the name and the identification stating that 'If they had the data base the name is in it and all of the agents could access it through their handheld. Michael Piscitelli suggested that David Hicks send a letter to the Commissioner regarding the database. Michael Piscitelli suggested that he would review the draft letter if needed. There was some additional discussion about the penalty for doctors for signing unwarranted requests for placards and David Hicks added that the new legislation included stiffer language to dissuade physicians from falsifying authorizations.

Michael Piscitelli summarized the meeting by stating that it would be good to get a letter to Commissioner Ward about the data base.

### Chairman's Report

Dana Canevari chaired the rest of the meeting as David Hicks was present but unable to vocalize as mentioned previously.

Matt Ranelli helped David Hicks write a letter to Commissioner Ward and they got an immediate reply. There will be implementation by DMV for a lot of the things that they wanted in the legislation but it will take time to work them into the system.

The September Minutes will be reviewed at next meeting.

### Department Report

The Connect-Ability grant is getting wrapped up. Through the grant, Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce Leadership forum will have a speaker with a disability talk about employment at the Chevrolet Theatre. . Michelle Duprey will send out an e-mail with the information. The employment fair will take place on November 18<sup>th</sup>.

### Old Business

The Commission needed to vote on the 2010 schedule of meetings. It was unanimously voted on to accept the proposed schedule for 2010.

#### Disability Website update

Stan Kontogiannis did not have materials with him. He sent out the suggestion electronically to everyone about the suggested changes. There was a discussion about including links to the Register story concerning the accessible taxis and to the NH Independent's story on the Spokebenders. Matt Ranelli said he would scan articles. There was also press coverage of the adaptive equipment at Lighthouse Point, however that was a project the Department sponsored and not relevant to the Commission's web page. It was decided to review what Stan Kontogiannis suggested again at another meeting.

### Process for New Commissioners

David Hicks reported that he did receive some questions from Robin Tousey Ayers, but that he was in the process of drawing up questions and guidelines for interviewing prospective commissioners and would have them by the next meeting.

### Film Series

There was discussion about trying to partner with Gateway College, who have a disability film series. One issue was that the series takes place at the North Haven campus. For the partnership to work, it would require that showings of films take place on the New Haven campus. In any case it couldn't hurt to contact the sponsors of the series.

#### New Business

Elections for Commission officers would be taking place next month. It was agreed that nominations would come from the floor rather than having a nominating committee.

Matt Ranelli wondered whether anyone had seen the new plans for the Gateway College that is being built downtown. It was decided to invite someone from Economic Development to attend a Commission meeting to review the plans as well as the parking arrangements.

Michelle Duprey mentioned that she has requested to be notified if there are any exemptions henceforth in accessibility requirements. She explained some recent issues involving housing exemptions.

#### Announcements

CT Commission on Deaf and Hearing Impairment is looking for first responders to attend on December 4<sup>th</sup> at Mohegan Sun.

CT Coalition for Deaf and Hard of Hearing, have come up with a tool for assisting with the PPT. It can be seen at the State Department Education website.

Heiwa Salovitz attended a ADAPT annual meeting in Atlanta. He described the protest he participated in at that State Capitol and the local HUD office. The Atlanta Housing Authority has a voluntary compliance agreement with a lot of the same issues as are present in New Haven.

The meeting was adjourned.