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Commission Minutes: July 1, 2009

PRESENT: Gilberto Cortez, Office of Human Relations; Lt. Anthony Taylor, Hartford Fire Department; Janet Wallens, Chair; Debra St. Germain, Vice-Chair; Commissioners Cathy Marseglia; Kathy Pacelle; Linda Schnitzer (via phone); and Cheryl Zeiner

EXCUSED: Chris Kelly; Candace Lowe

The meeting was called to order at 5:40PM. In the conference room of the Office of Human Relations at City Hall, 550 Main Street, Hartford. After determining that there was a quorum, Linda requested to be excused from the meeting, as she was not feeling well. She was excused and left the meeting.

Introductions of those present were made. Lt. Anthony Taylor explained his role in the Special Services Unit of the Hartford Fire Department. He explained reasons for his interest in becoming a Commissioner.

The minutes of the June meeting were reviewed. Gil requested that an addendum be added as it pertains to the use of the remaining \$227.59 in the budget. Although it was discussed at the June meeting to use the money to obtain awards for individuals who work above and beyond to improve the quality of life for persons with disabilities, it was decided through electronic voting to use the money for a deserving special education student in Hartford who would be attending post graduate studies. The head of the Special Education Dept. at Hartford Public High School, Meg Geary-DeLoreto, had recommended a student. However, the student may have decided to go into the military service instead. As of this meeting, therefore, it was unclear whether this student would be able to use the money. The difficulty arises in that a final decision on which student will receive the money needs to be made no later than 7/2/09. Janet indicated that she would contact Mrs. DeLoreto this evening and determine whether this student can use the money or if she can recommend someone else.

Janet will Email commissioners if any further action is needed. Cathy M made a motion to accept the minutes with the amendment. Kathy P seconded the motion and it was carried.

A representative of Local 1199, a union for health care workers in long term care facilities, made a request to attend a commission meeting and explain the Money Follows the Person (MFP)

initiative. This initiative was passed to allow residents of long term care facilities to live in the community if they are able. Cathy M made and Kathy P. seconded a motion to have the representative address the commissioners at a monthly meeting. The motion was carried.

Efforts are continuing to recruit new members to the Commission. Lt. Taylor is very interested and paperwork is beginning for the appointment ASAP. Gil indicated that he spoke to Timothy Porter who was interested. He was invited to attend this meeting but did not. Cheryl will follow-up with Merva Jackson of AFCAMP regarding a Hartford parent who might be interested. Janet explained to Lt. Taylor the three categories in which commissioners are appointed as designated in the bylaws.

A lengthy discussion ensued regarding whether the Commission should have an awards program during the month of October which is Disability Awareness month. The award would be presented to an individual or group that has worked above and beyond to improve the quality of life for persons with disabilities in Hartford. Janet felt that it was a good PR activity. Cheryl and Kathy M felt a better way might be having an open house but having it outdoors in the courtyard. With further discussion, it was felt that an appropriate compromise would be to have the open house and present an award during this activity. A committee comprised of Cheryl, Janet, Kathy M., Cathy P., and possibly Chris and Candace will meet at 4:45PM just prior to the meeting in August to discuss the logistics of such a program.

Kathy M reported that meetings will take place once a month to review building codes.

Janet indicated that she had made a call regarding the closing of the Arch Street entrance to the library. She has yet to hear back from them.

No updates or resolutions regarding the lip at the end of the ramp at Barcas Restaurant.

Cathy M. reported that the curb cuts near Vitos Restaurant appear to be appropriately placed at the crosswalks. She will look again but feels that this issue does not need to be continued on the agenda.

Cathy M. also reported that the brochure for the Commission is being updated. The brochure used at the open house and the Collaborative conference last September will be used with Spanish translations by Lillian Ruiz, Director.

Lt. Taylor explained that he currently is the only one in the Special Services Unit of the Hartford Fire Department. He stated that as a result of this situation, the CSI Program is not as operational as he would like. He is hopeful that within the next few months this may change with examinations and transfers within the department. Deborah questioned whether volunteers might be utilized for non classified activities. He indicated that if the above activity takes place things will be getting better. Deborah also suggested that we might look into the possibility of bussing residents in senior housing to the open house in October and registering them in the CSI Program at that time.

Janet indicated that she had been contacted by Amtrak personnel regarding the issue described in last months minutes. She was assured that should a person with a disability arrive when Amtrak personnel are not present at the station, personnel on the train would assist.

There has been no decision on the taxi bill that would allow a limited number to be accessible for wheelchair users.

There has been no decision on the bylaws. Chris continues to work on the status of the bylaws.

Cheryl will contact someone from the VA to assist with the identification of returning Hartford veterans who have been injured. The purpose of this is to let them be aware that the Commission is available to advocate and assist them in whatever way they need.

The issue of disability training for the council was tabled.

The issue of ADA certification of CT state building codes was tabled.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:20PM.

Respectfully submitted by,

Cheryl Zeiner, Secretary

