

**Commission for Persons with Disabilities**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**

January 7, 2016  
6:00 PM

**Present:** Michael Mendlers, Lisa Harrison, Lottie Scott, Raymond DeBlasio, Cynthia Litton, Joanne Philbrick, and Kevin Harkins

**Absent:** Jane O’Friel and George Chaput

**Call to Order:** The first regular meeting of the Commission for Persons with Disabilities was called to order at 6:01 pm by Michael Mendlers.

**Determination of Quorum:** It was determined a quorum was present.

**Approval of Minutes:** On a motion made by Joanne, seconded by Lottie, the minutes from the previous meeting on November 5, 2015 were approved as produced. On a motion made by Lisa, seconded by Lottie, the minutes from the previous meeting on December 3, 2015 were approved as produced.

**Old Business:**

Sidewalk condition observations to report to DPW – Between now and March, Mike wants a list of recommendations for sidewalk repairs from the commissioners. He encouraged commissioners to make note of sidewalks in the city that need repair. He will compile the list onto a spreadsheet to present to the Department of Public Works.

Upcoming program opportunities – The commission would like to bring awareness to city employees about the need for service animals as well as equal access for disabled persons in the city. The goal will be to educate city employees how to properly respond to persons with service animals.

George is in the process of putting together an informational session to educate city employees and small businesses on how to identify a service animal as well as the proper response to a service animal. This session will take place in spring 2016 and will be open to the general public. George will report back to the commission at the next meeting.

City Transition Plan – Mike will attach the 1993 transition plan to the meeting minutes for review. At the next meeting Mike would like to discuss possible recommendations to re-evaluate buildings for ADA compliance, if necessary. Brigid Marks attended the meeting and stated that all recommendations go to the council or the mayor and will task through the city manager.

ADA Training – The commission recommended ADA training as part of orientation for new city employees. The ADA training will educate city employees on how to properly deal with disabled persons with service animals. Brigid is going to contact Elanah Sherman to ask what proper writing to include service animal procedures in the employee handbook.

**New Business:**

Discuss Disabled Access Problems – The commission continued the discussion on disabled access problems. After a conversation with the Head of Brown Park, Joanne informed the commission that there could be a component for ADA accessibility at the new boat launch. This component may result in more funding. There is only one handicapped parking space outside of City Hall. However, additional handicapped parking spaces are located on the top parking deck across the street. There is not enough available seating inside City Hall while waiting. Mike will email the mayor to request

additional benches for the second and third floors. Handicapped parking needs to be adjusted on streets that have parallel parking, such as Church Street. Parallel parking can be difficult for disabled or handicapped drivers. More seating is needed in the downtown area as well.

Mike informed the commission of a phone call he received from a woman residing in Massachusetts. She explained a situation involving her friend who is a patient in a Norwichtown nursing home. The patient required a sign language interpreter which the facility would not provide. Mike explained that the nursing home is a privately owned business; therefore the commission cannot take action.

Although she was dissatisfied that the commission would not take action, Mike recommended that she call the State of Connecticut Office of Protection and Advocacy For Persons With Disabilities at 860-297-4300.

The commission would like to invite State Senator Cathy Osten to attend the next meeting and meet the commissioners.

On a motion from Lisa, seconded by Kevin, the commission would like to add citizen comments to the agenda of a future meeting. Time limit for citizen comments will be set for 30 minutes.

**Adjournment:** On a motion from Kevin, seconded by Lisa, the meeting adjourned at 7:28 pm. The next meeting will be at 6pm on Thursday, February 4, 2016 at Norwich City Hall, Room 319.

Marissa Clarke