

Westport Commission on People with Disabilities
Minutes of Meeting
Thursday April 15th, 2021 - 9:00am-10:30am
ZOOM MEETING MINUTES

Attendance: Jim Ross (Chair), Diane Johnson, Marina Derman, Stacie Curran, Tom Holleman, Joe Anastasi. Present from Human Services: Elaine Daignault. Absent - Doug Rivkin.

Audience who choose to identify: Sal Liccione, Tom Tarrant

Jim R -motion to approve March 18th 2021 minutes: Tom-1st, Marina- 2nd - all in favor.

Human Services Updates (Elaine Daignault):

- Elaine shares monthly DHS update via email - quick recap:
- Transportation
 - Budget restoration meeting with RTM
 - bus stations - has upcoming meeting
- Energy assistance - time has been extended (COVID)
 - New renter assistance program called UniteCT is now active and available to residents. Contact DHS if you require assistance.
- Elaine will send synopsis of NAMI for those not familiar with the group.
- There is a new statewide push for re-zoning, may go above Town level, to state level.
- P & Z Affordable Housing sub-committee continues to advocate for a new regulation allowing for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU's) which will likely pass and allow for more flexibility for residents to sublet in homes. There is a hope that this will increase affordable housing options as well.

Discussion:

Sal L. - wants us to send letters/emails to RTM & selectman office, re: Transit Budget/reinstate funding.

Jim R: We, as a commission have to decide if we want a meeting to discuss this - reinstate the funding. We did this in 2019 - do we want to do again?

Bus services for anyone - Commuter Loop, Wheels to you

Public - comment - TomT - used it regularly until covid. Can't judge ridership now in a pandemic. - when back to regularity, it will be needed again/used again.

Diane J - thinks its critical, and Tom H - feels if we let it go now, we will lose it.

As CPD - we will gather additional info, arrange special meeting prior to Transportation meeting, and draft letter.

Committee Reports:

EMPLOYMENT: Employment for Everyone is a new CPD initiative to encourage businesses to hire more individuals with disabilities

Joe A – has spearheaded this initiative with help from Sharuna M. and other commission members

Employment Is For Everyone. It is a move to entice business community to employ people with disabilities - from small to big business.

Economic incentives & Cultural Incentives. Working with DMA & Chamber Commerce.

(Document attached) Mission of the document is to create a roadmap for Employment partnership, get rid of the mystery and present steps to take.

Joe - not speaking for other agencies - but from STAR's view - (Katie Banzoff) upon review of document, she feels good for publication - what is actionable:

1. Re-convene DMA and Chamber to solidify partnership
2. How to we support and direct participating businesses?
3. Messaging to be reviewed and approved by First Selectman
3. Sensitivity to Employers - don't want to shame, or make it awkward, we can help, but if they are just not interested we won't make it awkward. Will do best to match, always know there will be failures. and a thank you again to Sharuna M.

Jim R- how do we measure success? Progress? How much falls on Job coach?

Discussion:

We do not want to shame or exude peer pressure

Diane J - what is our role, Marina - where does the \$ come from? Does this only support ID, and there are variety of disabilities. What about all other agencies? Stacie - And the private sector/non-agency individuals? How do we reach all the people, who gets preference? Affordable Housing analogy - where an administrator was hired to get the info out and provide equity/non-bias.

Elaine D- maybe the town or commissioners work to create a portal/clearing house for opportunities for allOur role, CPD is advocacy, awareness, education serving Westport residents. Maybe the town can act as clearing house - to reach all agencies, etc.

On record - Joe A. wants to be totally transparent as a STAR Employee, he does not wish to create any kind of conflict of interest.

Want this to be wide scope - how we train employers

Elaine D - will be thinking of this when she hires new social worker, do they have passion for this area too.

Marina - BRS - does ok on job training, not great at getting people jobs, but they have \$ for the employers. How can we build some piece of this- maybe be the conduit that farms the money out to job coaches..maybe we invite BRS - see what role they can serve. Maybe we invite all agencies, let them know what we are thinking (Laurel house too) - we are disability friendly community, maybe put out press release, to invite all agencies - need to get Selectman's office approval.

Joe A - to over simplify, its lead generation platform, for employers to connect to a community of candidates. This is a tool, but we do need to make sure all back end things are working

Jim R - circle back - our role is education. This one page is first step. So many in businesses have no idea. We need to educate. We will learn as we go

Next steps; Elaine D will connect with Jim Marpe & Jen Tooker, get blessing to go ahead and form this next larger meeting to call all agencies.

Next Steps - we will get special meeting for CPD for Transportation funding letter discussion

(Stacie & Joe A had to drop off zoom 10am)