

Westport Commission on People with Disabilities Executive Committee Meeting Via ZOOM- (Minutes) Thursday February 6, 2024 10:00am-

Attendance: Jim Ross - Chair, Sharuna Mahesh, Daniel Maya, Stacie Curran, Diane Johnson. Joe Anastasi HS: Elaine Daignault, Margaret Smith, Kayla Morgan, Ryan Baylis

10:08am – Employment is for Everyone (E4E) -

Elaine offered the following review of the E4E platform and makes recommendations-

There are three sides to the current platform – providing resources and information to jobseekers, offer of assistance for businesses wishing to post jobs and/or get technical assistance in making accommodations, and job postings.

The job posts have been difficult to acquire without significant leg work from commissioners and staff. When businesses do post, we don't always hear if the position is filled and disappointing job seekers, making the platform ineffective in its current form.

Process - Human Services helps individuals who come through the site only if they complete the referral form, or make an appointment. We do not always know who has been on the site and has looked for work. When DHS receives a new self-referral, we do a short intake interview with them to determine needs – basic cognitive assessment, review of past jobs and skills, and advice on how to apply and prepare for job search. DHS social workers try to make connections with other employment services and can occasionally make a recommendation to apply for certain jobs, but we do not provide in-depth career development or job coaching. DHS is a pass-through to other agencies, resources, especially using the Library Career Coach. Library - has a career coach on staff thanks to a ARPA grant from Human Services which helps people with resumes & Job coaching

Elaine is recommending that we take the job posting section down and include current job search engines like Indeed, Glass Door, etc until we can find a different partnership to re-establish a job board and/or shift gears to continue in advocacy efforts – perhaps commissioners joining Rotaries, Chamber, Downtown Association etc to promote mission.

Joe A - Agrees. While hopeful that Westport Downtown merchants and Chamber would do more to promote the initiative and increase job postings, this has not been the case.

Elaine mentioned a new site that local high schools use called QUAD JOBS as an example of exploring other options. Westport Youth Commission has initiated a new partnership with QUADJOBS with Staples High School to host the student employment platform on the Town's website. The caveat is that students need to use their school email address to register and access job postings. The employer covers the cost of posting so no cost to Town or school. Joe is hoping their could be a work around on this site.

Stacie C- INDEED - questions how this platform is used for job placement for people with disabilities ,(I.e. thru Project Search.) - and how maybe using Transition Program to find more jobs. – E4E may consider more partnerships/leveraging among other programs.

Jim. - frustrated to hear any misperceptions about E4E. The project is an opportunity to learn and improve.

DECISION - keep site - remove Job Postings

Joe has previously talked with INDEED- but the idea isn't a large National Platform, so our small town initiative wasn't desirable for such a big company.

Elaine D - QUAD JOBS - serves 600 schools- wonder if they could localize it so we could reach potential employers - Businesses pay to post their jobs, service is free to Town/Students with school email address - works similarly to how the Towns pay to post to reputable jobs to sites

Other employment support and resources for CPD to consider: Disability IN

- Ryan B – spoke with Connecticut Disability IN in the hopes of bringing them in as a future CPD and possible larger community program. Perhaps they know of businesses who hire people with disabilities.- good area to explore.

Revisiting the idea of Disability IN Guest Speaker - speaker wanted \$3-4,000.00 for a one time training/program. Ryan and Elaine will circle back - maybe small zoom meeting to CPD only to see if it's worth the expense and maybe negotiate fee for a future community-wide program.

Jim R - seems small companies do not have the resources to do new, innovative things - only the big ones are resourced to do so and try.

Other topic areas to discuss at future CPD General meeting:

Compo Playground - Sharuna & Stacie are reps for accessibility – feel our voices to ensure accessibility are not being heard- they are asking the Commission for support/stronger representation if things do not shift in the next week. To be discussed further.

TOPIC ADDED TO TODAY'S AGENDA:

The committee agreed to briefly discuss a new Special Needs Housing Project which is on the Feb 12th P & Z agenda due to the time constraints of the hearing.

- Glendenning development project - includes Special Needs housing, affordable housing and residential housing - David Waldman and Rick Redness (builder) is requesting support from disability population – David will be at the Porch at Christies this Saturday at 12:30pm to discuss and answer questions about the project – Commissioners are encouraged to attend. All residents are welcome.
- Discussion of the past advocacy in 2020 for 136 Riverside and the undoubtable need for Special Needs Housing. This Commission agreed that they support the need for Special needs housing - without specifically mentioning a location or particular developer at this stage.
- Motion - Diane 1st, Jim 2nd - All in favor.

A motion was made to draft a letter of support for Special Needs Housing to be submitted to the P & Z before Friday, Feb 9th.

Elaine D- will draft letter representing our intent on the above to support efforts to improve Affordable housing, earmarked for people with disabilities. Elaine will distribute and incorporate edits as needed.

Meeting Adjourned.