

Town of West Hartford
Advisory Commission for Persons with Disabilities
Monday, May 12, 2025, 7:00 PM
Elmwood Community Center Auditorium
MINUTES

Commission Members Present: Tara McNeil (Chair), Christine Hayden, Christopher Holley, Kimberly Jacobson, Joseph Kolczynski, Elisa Neira, Jennifer Searls

Commission Members Not in Attendance: Erin Conneely, Brittany Koziara, Amy Messinger, Jason Mirsky

Guest(s) Present:

- Adrienne Billings-Smith, Manager, Town of West Hartford Office of Employee Development & Community Engagement

Opening:

Co-Chair Tara McNeil called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and introduced Adrienne Billings-Smith as the guest speaker for the meeting.

Presentation:

Adrienne introduced herself to the commission. She reviewed her background as a former town council member and resident. Adrienne shared information with the commission including:

- The town's consultant, Institute for Human Centered Design (IHCD) has begun their evaluation of town facilities, programs and services.
- The roll-out and wider distribution of the ADA survey that commission members took in March. Adrienne encouraged commission members to publicize and share the survey with their community to spur more feedback and input to the ADA Accessibility committee.
- Two Community Conversations taking place on May 19th and May 20th. The purpose of the forums is to engage individuals who live and work in West Hartford to learn about the town's ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan process and to provide feedback to aid the town in its work. Valerie Fletcher, a consultant with IHCD will give a summary and host a listening session to gather feedback on the experiences and needs of people with disabilities regarding town facilities and programs. Adrienne encouraged commission members to attend at least one Community Conversation, to encourage neighbors and friends - even those without disabilities - to attend and to publicize the events through social media. Flyers were available for commission members and they provided ideas on where and how to publicize the events and distribute flyers.
- Valerie Fletcher will also be available for individual conversations on May 20 from 9 am - 11 am.
- The Senior Citizens Advisory Commission will have a panel presentation on Age-Friendly Communities from 10:30 - 12:00 on Tuesday May 20 at the Bishops Corner Senior Center. Adrienne will be joined on the panel by individuals from the West Hartford Senior Citizens Advisory Commission, and individuals representing senior centers in West Hartford, Cheshire, Glastonbury, and Groton.

- The West Hartford Public Schools are partnering with the American School for the Deaf to put up a mural to celebrate the Deaf- and Hard-of-Hearing Community in the town. The town is soliciting suggestions and donations of buildings where the mural can be painted.'
- Adrienne is also integral in the Town's America 250 celebration - a celebration of America's 250th birthday. The commission discussed ideas for how the commission can help with the town's planning for the celebration.

Meeting Minutes: Minutes from the March meeting were approved after a correction to a misspelling was pointed out. Corrected minutes will be shared and published to the town website.

Town Staff Report: Suzanne Oslander was not able to attend the meeting. Tara McNeil reported on Suzanne's behalf. Suzanne asked that Tara pass out information on the town's Renter's Rebate program. ADA Accessibility surveys and Community Discussions flyers were distributed to members and asked that they help distribute and share the materials.

Old Business: Tara shared the letter that was crafted and sent to the ADA Accessibility committee as a result of the commission's resolutions of the March virtual meeting. Kimberly Jacobsen pointed out that the wider distribution of the ADA surveys and the Community Conversations meetings taking place in May were a direct result of the commission's advocacy and encouragement to engage more of the town's residents in the process.

New Business:

Election of Vice Chair: Tara McNeil distributed information on the roles and responsibilities for the Vice Chairman of the Commission. She asked for nominations for the role. Jenn Searls nominated herself for the role of Vice Chair. Elisa Neira seconded the nomination. No other commission members were nominated. As such, Tara McNeil accepted the nomination and Jenn was appointed the Vice Chairman of the Commission.

Public Comment: Mary Silverberg shared ideas for how to distribute ADA surveys and flyers about the Community Conversations.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 8:05 pm

Next Meeting: Monday, June 23, 2025 at Elmwood Community Center Auditorium at 7:00 pm. The Town of West Hartford's Corporation Counsel will be attending to answer commission members' questions.