Office on the Disabled
City of Saint Louis
Advisory Council Meeting
Room 305, City Hall
September 24, 2012

Minutes

Gina Hilberry called the meeting to order at 9:15 A.M. Members present included Gina Hilberry, Wendy Sullivan, Mike Keller, Kerri Morgan, Jane Thomas, Bill Sheldon and Linda Baker. David Newburger and Kim Kreitner were also present. Absent was Willie Kimbrough, Jr.

Minutes from the July 30th meeting were adopted.

The next meeting for the advisory council is scheduled on October 22nd at 9:00 A.M. in Room 400.

Determination of New Name for Office on the Disabled

A prior request was made by several council members that the Office on the Disabled should have a name that is more person centered. Based on the previous suggestions of Disability Access Office, Office for People with Disabilities, and Office on Disability for new office names, the advisory council members took a vote and determined that their choice would be, City of Saint Louis Disability Access Office. Mr. Newburger reminded council members that a name change would have to part of a broader ordinance and be voted on by the Board of Alderman. Council members state that they understand that this is their way of advising the City what their preference would be regarding the future name of the office.

All Ready Summit Follow Up

Ms. Hilberry asked for feedback from Mr. Sheldon, Ms. Thomas and Mr. Keller, who both attended the summit. Ms. Thomas stated that it was excellent and wonderfully organized. There were over 150 attendees which well surpassed the original expected numbers. The day began with a panel discussion about preparedness and various limits of first responders. Ms. Thomas was surprised that so many first responders (fire, police, EMS, Red Cross) don't meet many of the needs of the disabled community and the panelists acknowledged the truth in

that. There were also breakout sessions for groups given a series of questions to answer about preparedness within their organizations and in their private lives as well. After these breakout sessions everyone came back together and shared their findings with the larger group. Also included in the day was a train the trainer session led by Elena Sabin of the American Red Cross. Mr. Keller and Ms. Thomas agree that this training was very helpful but expressed their concerns that because it was at the end of the day not enough people were still there to experience the training. While Mr. Newburger agreed that attendance dropped off after lunch he and many others were happily surprised at the large number who remained. Another highlight of the summit was the emergency kits provided to those who filled out commitment cards that they would utilize these for trainings within their particular organizations. These kits were mostly handed out at the end of the day in order to hold onto greater numbers of attendees. Mr. Sheldon agreed that the summit was a success but also stated that it was understandable to lose some attendees due to the length of the day.

Mr. Newburger pointed out that while we can't lose focus on individual emergency preparedness, it became evident after hearing first responders speak (for example, the fire chief's defending stance of leaving wheelchairs behind) that they must be brought up to speed on how to best assist those with disabilities in emergency situations.

All advisory council members were provided with the materials given out at the summit (flash drives and handouts) to go over at their leisure.

EMA Emergency Plans

Mr. Keller informed the council that he suggested to the chair of MOSILC's disaster preparedness committee that during their 2013 convention they start a half day early in order to allow for an emergency preparedness train the trainer session. Mr. Newburger offered the assistance of the office and the council should they need any in order to make this a reality.

Mr. Newburger put forward that if anyone on the council would like to assist Glen Bell in evaluating and verifying other cities emergency management plans that would be most helpful. There is also hope that AmeriCorps members will assist in this endeavor.

Ideally, Mr. Newburger would like to send out findings of emergency management plans for the cities and counties in November and go public with them in April or May of 2013.

Whole City Transition Plan

Ms. Hilberry spoke on reviewing the transition plan for the city of Charlotte, NC while conducting trainings for them regarding physical barriers. One reason that

Charlotte's progress is impressive is because all parties (departments) are cooperating to work toward making public rights of way accessible to everyone. Something that became clear is that it's not about how to fix a curb ramp; it's about how to find the money to fix the curb ramp. The starting point of a transition plan is stating the X, Y, and Z need to be completed and then we work on how to make it happen.

Ms. Hilberry also stated that based on her research, the best transition plans seem to come from the west coast. Vancouver, WA and San Francisco, CA are two excellent examples of comprehensive transition plans. Both cities start by introducing language and ideas to teach citizens about accessibility by posting the information on their websites to invite involvement from the public.

Ms. Hilberry will send links to council members on how to locate these transition plans.

Over the next coming month, Ms. Hilberry will start an outline of a transition plan and assign tasks to various council members based on their particular strengths.

Mr. Newburger then asked for assistance with wording on a grievance form because of concern regarding confidentiality. It is problematic to ask for someone to disclose their disability even though it would be helpful to know in order to assist them. An example would be, knowing that someone who is deaf and requesting an audio version of their water bill may be able to be assisted in a more cost effective manner. Mr. Newburger also pointed out that the Justice Department does not ask for disclosure of disability on their grievance procedure. Ms. Baker made the recommendation that the paperwork be worded in such a way as to allow people an option to volunteer what disability they may have. Mr. Newburger was in favor of this suggestion.

Ms. Hilberry also mentioned that over the coming month she will be starting an outline for the transition plan and will be assigning tasks along the way to advisory council members in order to have group involvement. All council members were in agreement with this step.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:20 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Kerri Morgan, Secretary