

Suffolk County Disabilities Advisory Board

August 10, 2011 Meeting Minutes

Approved

A meeting of the Suffolk County Disabilities Advisory Board was held on August 10, 2011 in the Conference Room of Building 158, North County Complex, Hauppauge at 2:10 pm, Chairperson Beverly Cody presided.

PRESENT:

GROUP A

Frank Krotzschinsky, Esq.	Representing County Executive Steve Levy
Linda O'Donohoe	S. C. Department of Social Services
Chris Chatterton/Jennifer Freeman	Representing SCDPW Transportation
Lew Johnson	Representing S.C. Department of Public Works, Design & Construction Division

GROUP B

Beverly Cody	Member Secretary & Acting Chair
Valerie Lewis	Member
Kleo King, Esq.	Member

GROUP C

Teresa Strum	Member, Western Suffolk BOCES
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GROUP D

Roy Probeyahn	Member
Clifford Hymowitz	Member
Glenn Campbell, Esq.,	Member
Jodi Nicastro	Rep. Ingo Gloeckner, Member, ACCES

GUESTS: Garrett Hulett/SILO, Bruce Blower, Sharon Garcia, Clubhouse of Suffolk, Robin Mayr

STAFF: Heidi Zeitler-Senior Clerk Typist, Suffolk County Office of Handicapped Services

EXCUSED: Jack Caffey, Representing Presiding Officer William Lindsay, Terry Maccarrone, Barbara Falkman, James Kokindo, Carolyn Bossert/Donna Passin, Debbie Epple, Leg. Kate Browning/Timothy Rothang, Mitch Shapiro

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF May 18, 2011: Beverly asked if there were any changes to be made to the minutes of May 18, 2011 as distributed. There were none. Roy made a motion to accept the minutes as distributed and Valerie seconded the motion. All were in favor and the minutes were unanimously approved.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF June 29, 2011: Beverly asked if there were any changes to be made to the minutes of June 29, 2011 as distributed. There were none. Roy made a motion to accept the minutes as distributed and Cliff seconded the motion. All were in favor and the minutes were unanimously approved.

CORRESPONDENCE: None

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT: Beverly mentioned an article in Newsday recently about a totally accessible water park located in San Antonio, Texas called Morgan's Wonderland. For further information you can check out their website at Morganswonderland.com.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Architectural Barriers - Lew had nothing new to report.

Community Partnership - Frank had nothing new to report.

Education - Teresa said they are continuing to follow the status of the IEP diploma.

Housing - Vacant

Legislation - Vacant. Frank said ABLE News had an interesting article this month regarding a piece of legislation involving the safety of people that have developmental disabilities. Frank said it sounds like it's in the proposal stages right now so it doesn't necessarily mean it will be passed.

Cliff reported that the Access Board has begun to address access in trails, so that there will be standards the trail will have to meet to be accessible. Unfortunately, the only trails that will be covered are the federal trails. Cliff suggested that maybe Suffolk County Parks could adopt this for their parks as well. Beverly said we would be glad to look into this further once Cliff can get us something in writing so we can see what they are recommending.

Transportation - Vacant.

The discussion continued from the last Advisory Board meeting regarding SCDOT Division looking to implement a plan of action to get the denial rates down on SCAT paratransit. They would like to put a 'No-Show' policy in place for the habitual no shows within the system and they would like to modify the reservation period by cutting down from a 7 day reservation to a 3 day reservation.

Beverly/Chair asked Heidi to please resend everyone the e-mail from SILO regarding the "No-Show/Late Cancellation Policy" as well as the hand-out from Cliff on the "Rights and Responsibilities of Transit Customers with Disabilities". Everyone on the board is asked to review both hand-outs and then e-mail Heidi with their suggestions which will be read at the next SCDAB meeting on September 21, 2011.

Bruce said Nassau County ABLE Ride has used the point system for many years. They allow so many no-shows without canceling within a certain period of time and if you do, you get so many points against you.

If you are at a certain point levels and continue with the no-shows you are told you will be suspended, so they give you plenty of warning to comply before they suspend service. Bruce said he did not see the point system listed on SILO's Transportation Committee sheet. Valerie said she would like to see the point system pertain to the bus company as well.

Beverly asked Chris to contact ABLE Ride and Westchester Paratransits to find out in writing what their policies are regarding no-shows and late cancellations. Chris said he would e-mail Heidi the information before the next meeting on 9/21/11.

Valerie acknowledges that there are no-show and late cancellation issues, but if we don't find out how SCDOT puts their manifest together then she doesn't feel we would be able to properly address the cancellations and no-shows.

Bruce said when he was Director of SCOHS, the statistics that were provided by DPW Transportation never showed any quantity stating what the company's no-shows were.

Chris said DPW/Transportation would be perfectly happy to provide those figures as well. He also added that SCDOT is not looking to penalize passengers who miss a trip here or there it would only apply to people who have created a pattern of abuse.

Beverly asked Chris to bring those statistics to us every month where it's the company's fault for the no-shows, late trips, as well as the other statistics that he usually brings such as total trip requests, request trips approved, trips that were denied and the percentage of denials.

Frank mentioned to Chris that he had sent an email over to transportation a couple of weeks ago asking SCDPW Transportation for those statistics at the request of the Advisory Board. Frank added that the idea of a no-show policy whether it's the passengers fault or the Company's fault is a concept that has been adopted by many other paratransit systems.

Cliff said SCAT riders were never provided with any information on what their responsibilities are as a paratransit passenger. Cliff also suggested DPW Transit use a Gantt chart which is very helpful when monitoring a project's progress and helps determine the root causes of a problem.

Roy said he was frustrated because he thought this same discussion was tabled at last month's meeting. SCDOT was supposed to look into the points that were brought up by the board and bring their feedback to this month's meeting. Roy asked if Chris could include statistics on the bus company's no-shows to which Beverly added statistics on passengers return trips as well. We need a commitment from SCDOT to bring those recommendations to our next meeting.

Chris said the FTA has determined that the denial rate for SCAT is too high and has directed SCDOT to create a plan of action to make sure that they do not have any denials. SCDOT has come up with a draft plan which includes adding more buses, educating riders and is considering a no-show policy and late cancel policy. They are also considering moving the advance reservation date from 7 days to 3 or 4 days. SCDOT wants the Disabilities Advisory Board to advise them on these policies. SCDOT will present them to us, the board will review them and then they will then give their comments as well.

Bruce said the Disabilities Advisory Board has oversight with eligibility on SCAT. Bruce asked Chris why he said earlier that the call in time to cancel trips is 1 ½ hours when all of DPW/Transportation's publications state that the call in time is 2 hours ahead which is the same as what the S.C. Office for People with Disabilities publications all have. All Suffolk riders have been told since the inception of SCAT is that the call in time for cancellations is 2 hours. Bruce said a quarter of the trips which are not taken are vacant seats, which gives SCAT Dispatch no time to fill those seats by rescheduling the denied trips. If SCAT riders were to be told to make their cancellations the day before, dispatch would be able to reschedule those trips with people who were originally denied and this would cut down on the no-shows.

Jennifer asked if she and Chris could come away from this meeting with a bullet point list of what the Disabilities Advisory Board would like to see happen. They then would gather the data and present it to us at our next meeting with the final recommendations. Frank said he will make sure that it gets done.

Frank proposed a motion and Roy the made motion for DPW Transportation to distribute the draft from which they have read from today, to all SCDAB board members so that we would have a number of suggestions to work with. Roy moved and Beverly seconded it.

Jennifer said they would need to get approval from the department head first.

Cliff said non-compliance in Suffolk County in parking lots is a very big issue because Towns have no way of ensuring that parking lots are in compliance. It's all based on the NYS Building Code, so depending on when you got the CO, that's what code you have to be compliant with. If you repaint or remark 51% of the parking lot, then you are required to upgrade the entire parking lot. Cliff said a 3ft access aisle has never been legal. NYS does not require that people who get temporary parking permits turn them in. Cliff is trying to change the town code in Brookhaven so that any work that needs to be done in a parking lot would require a permit. Cliff asked Frank if there was any way the county could make a recommendation that all expired or temporary parking permits be turned in. Frank said this board can suggest that type of legislation be passed on either a town or state level.

Bruce said handicapped parking tags have the last 3 digits of the persons driver's license on them, so if a police officer wants to challenge it, they can ask to see the persons driver's license.

Bruce also said town building inspectors have the authority with the striping in the town parking lots. NYS law says parking access aisles that have the diagonal strips between spaces have to be 8 feet wide which is the same as in the Vehicle and Traffic Law. Kleo added that the provisions of the Vehicle and Traffic Law were amended into the existing building code so that building inspectors can now go on the property and site them for parking issues. Jennifer suggested Cliff contact 'Governmental Relations' within the County Executive's office, they are a good resource for researching and could also help draft a resolution.

Cliff would like to address the issue of the county providing information in alternative format. Beverly asked Heidi to put the issue on next month's agenda. Beverly said the braille signage issue still has to be addressed as well. Beverly would like to call Helen Keller National Center in Sands Point and make a trip out there to discuss options. Valerie said Helen Keller doesn't have guidelines for color but said what was agreed upon 3 years ago was to go with a matte black sign with white lettering or matte white sign and black lettering. Details were discussed and Kevin Darcy brought a sample over to Valerie at her job site with blue colors instead. Signage at the new Citi field was discussed as well. Valerie already spoke to the Access Board, the Commission for the Blind & Visually Handicapped, Helen Keller and the only thing we know for sure is that it should be in high contrast colors.

Robin Mayr said she is legally blind and feels the sign should be a yellow background with black writing because she feels most people with visual problems seem to have problems with white and black colors.

Chris said the problem is going to be, who is paying for it, if its transportation division dollars, which are federal dollars they specifically require that you don't use geographic preferences, it would have to go out nationally. The RFP process was discussed.

Leg. Schneiderman's Transportation Committee recently held a public hearing and SCDOT said they never received the recommendations from the Disabilities Advisory Board/Transportation Task Force, but as we found out today, it was given to Kevin Darcy. Beverly said if we can find what was given a couple of years ago we need to get it going. Bruce said another other thing that was decided was for the direction of the route to be put on the sign.

Employment – Carolyn Bossert/Donna Passin were excused.

COUNTY DEPARTMENTS:

Suffolk County Office of Handicapped Services - Frank reported he attended SILO's ADA Celebration and our office also had a table with information services offered. Frank also attended a meeting in NYC with the LIRR ADA Task Force where they discussed the issue of buses being provided when there are no trains running on a particular route. They usually meet quarterly but this meeting 2 years later was in response to the LIRR being criticized by the FTA for not providing adequate access for people with disabilities when the trains aren't running. They would have to have the regular size buses with wheelchair lifts. The next thing scheduled with the LIRR Task Force is an inspection of the Ronkonkoma train station.

Suffolk County Parks - Terry was excused.

S.C. Department of Social Services - Linda had nothing new to report.

S.C. Office of Public Information - Debbie was excused.

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Old Business – None

New Business – Beverly asked Frank to please follow-up with appointments to the Disabilities Advisory Board because of the ongoing vacancies.

Bruce brought the attached article from the East Hampton Star titled “Failure to Enforce,” dated August 4, 2011 by Richard Rosenthal (ex-Chair of our Suffolk County Disability Advisory Board). Richard has brought the lack of access for the disabled to the forefront in Suffolk County for many years. Please read the attached two articles and come to the next meeting with recommendations this board might take on this position. (See attachments)

S.C. Department of Health/Division of Children with Special Health Care Needs-
Barbara was excused.

S.C. Department of Public Works/Transportation Division – see above transportation discussion.

S.C. Human Rights Commission - James was excused.

S.C. Community Development – Vacant

S.C. Library System – Valerie had nothing new to report.

SILO - Glenn had nothing new to report.

Beverly added a press release from ‘ADAPT’ dated 8/8/11 at the end of the meeting into the handouts and asked if the board could write a letter. Frank said he would research it.

ADJOURNMENT: Glen made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Chris seconded the motion. The motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 3:50 p.m. The next meeting will be held on September 21, 2011 at 2:00 p.m. in the Conference room, Building 158, Veterans Memorial Highway, Hauppauge.

Respectfully submitted,
Heidi Zeitler