

**WEST HOLLYWOOD  
DISABILITIES ADVISORY BOARD  
MINUTES  
May 14, 2003**

**1. CALL TO ORDER:**

Chair Ed Ahern called the Meeting to order.

**2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:**

The Pledge of Allegiance was lead by Norman Cherner.

**3. ROLL CALL:**

**PRESENT:** Ed Ahern, Michael Arrigo, Rob Bergstein, Norman Cherner, Yola Dore, and Ann Semonco

**EXCUSED:** Suzanne Dietrich and Joel Ring

**ALSO PRESENT:**

Staff Liaisons Daphne Dennis and David Giugni

**4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:** Agenda of May 14 was approved.

**5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Amended minutes of the April 9, 2003 meeting were approved.

**6. PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Michael Sidler expressed her dissatisfaction with the options for public comment and left the meeting.

**7. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

**A. Decomposed Granite:** The Disability Advisory Board unanimously approved a resolution to the Public Facilities Commission urging that the use of decomposed granite as a surface material be re-evaluated.

**B. Disability Awareness Month, 2003:** Discussion of Disability Awareness Month in October, 2003 was tabled until the June meeting of the Disability Advisory Board. Chair Ahern

announced that the slogan for the national observance is “America works best when all Americans work.”

**C. SB 921:** Robin Podolsky, Press Deputy to State Senator Sheila Kuehl, presented information about the universal healthcare bill which the Senator has introduced and urged the Board to voice its support for it. Ms. Podolsky explained that the bill proposes to centralize how care is paid for—not care itself. The bill would create a system where there is none, and stabilize costs, which have been rising dramatically on a yearly basis. The rise in costs is due both to the lack of system within the state and to the larger and larger percentage of the healthcare dollar that goes to administration. The proposed plan is a state-administered reimbursement system within which healthcare delivery itself remains private. Every resident of the state would be eligible to participate and the program would be funded by a percentage charge on payroll taxes, and new taxes on tobacco and alcohol. Costs could be stabilized through several means including bulk purchase of pharmaceuticals and medical equipment. An elected commissioner and a board, which will include members of the public in addition to health care professionals, would govern the system. Ms. Podolsky responded to questions from Board members indicating: (1) the program would be funded by a combination of the state funds currently allocated to healthcare, in addition to new payroll taxes, tobacco and alcohol taxes. (2) pharmacies will continue to be independent. (3) the intent of the bill is to cover prosthetic devices, including hearing aids—the full list of items to be covered was intentionally left out of the bill to guard against the trading off of some items for others as the approval process progresses.

**D. Universal Healthcare:** Francis Pinn, representing Healthcare for All, indicated the importance of groups like the Disability Advisory Board speaking out in support or opposition to important state legislation. She explained that the other healthcare bill currently in the Legislature is SB 2, sponsored by Bergman and Spiers. That bill adds health coverage for low-wage workers, but does not add coverage for people who are not employed.

- E. Resolution supporting SB 921:** The Disability Advisory Board voted unanimously to endorse a resolution in support of SB 921.

## **8. NEW BUSINESS**

- A. West Hollywood Employment Services & Training:** Jason Manino, new staff person for the WHEST program, introduced himself and reported that he is at City hall Monday, Wednesday and every other Friday and is available to work one-on-one with job seekers. Chair Ahern welcomed Mr. Manino and indicated that he has found several of the programs of the Career Resource Center to be inaccessible to wheelchair users. Mr. Cherner asked how services are advertised and how many people are served annually. Mr. Manino responded that there are program flyers, ads are placed in appropriate publications and the program sponsors an annual Job Fair. The program served 400 people last year. Chair Ahern wondered if the staff members are trained on how to deal effectively with clients with disabilities. Mr. Manino responded that there are nine different training programs, which each staff person must attend.

## **9. DISABILITY RELATED ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Ms. Semonco announced that she has applied for a seat on the MTA Commission, but has yet to hear if she will be considered for appointment. She also reported a recent experience with the new Dial-a-Ride van in which it took 25 minutes for the driver to secure her wheelchair. Ms. Semonco has reported this to Terry Slimmer.

Ms. Dore reported that she found the van unacceptable when she was asked to evaluate its accessibility and comfort. She would like to request that Transportation staff is invited to a future Disability Advisory Board meeting.

Mr. Arrigo announced that he is not re-applying for the Disability Advisory Board, and distributed a letter to the members. He expressed his pleasure at having served on the Board and indicated his willingness to continue to serve until a replacement is appointed.

Mr. Cherner expressed his gratitude to the members of the Board on the chance that this is the last meeting when the current members would be serving together, pending Council appointments of new members. Mr. Cherner wondered if the DAB could appoint a member to attend the Sister City committee meeting and Chair Ahern responded that it would not be possible to do so, as the item was not on the agenda. He suggested that if Mr. Cherner is interested, he could attend the meeting without an official designation to do so by the Board. Mr. Cherner suggested the future discussion of the inaccessibility of outdoor dining, meeting with the Human Services Commission about the RFP process, and nutrition services available in the City.

Ms. Dore reported that she had attended a Senior Advisory Board meeting where a "taste test" was presented for evaluations of several proposed new dishes for the congregate meal sites and home-delivered meal programs of Jewish Family Services.

Chair Ahern reported that disability advocates are demonstrating in Washington D.C. to advocate for benefits funding to follow individuals regardless of state residency. He will provide the members with information about advocating for more curb cuts and ramps in the City. Chair Ahern announced that he will not seek re-appointment to the Board and praised the members. He urged that the Board's work be focused on the community, not on individuals.

Mr. Arrigo thanked Mr. Ahern and praised his tenure as Chair.

Ms. Dore thanked Mr. Ahern and indicated her disappointment that he is leaving.

#### **10. STAFF COMMENTS:**

Susan Alexman thanked Chair Ahern and Mr. Arrigo for their service on the Board. She announced that Daniel Tang, Disability Specialist, has resigned his position due to health problems, which do not allow him to continue. Ina Epstein will continue to work with clients while the recruitment for a new Specialist is conducted. Chair Ahern asked what the most frequent service issues are for people with disabilities. Ms. Alexman responded that affordable housing, escort

transportation, and advocacy for medical services are the current crucial service needs.

Ms. Dennis thanked the Board for their service and announced that David Giugni would be taking over as the City's AIDS Program Specialist now that Tom West has accepted a position as City Clerk. As such, Mr. Giugni will no longer be staffing the Disability Advisory Board.

**11. PUBLIC COMMENT:** There was no further public comment.

**12. ADJOURNMENT:**

Chair Ahern adjourned the Disabilities Advisory Board meeting to the next meeting on **Wednesday, June 11, 2003 at 6:30 p.m. at the Community Center at Plummer Park.**

G: human/soc-svcs/misc/dab/minutes-0503

