



**COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES
MINUTES
Monday, November 10, 2008
6:00 PM**

*FIFTH FLOOR LARGE CONFERENCE ROOM, CITY HALL,
3900 MAIN STREET, RIVERSIDE, 92522
GENERAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT, 951-826-5427*

MISSION STATEMENT

“The mission of the Commission on Disabilities is to promote greater awareness of, respect for, and the total participation of individuals with disabilities into all aspects of life.”

State law restricts the Commission on Disabilities from taking action on an item unless it has been included on an agenda and posted at least 72 hours in advance of a meeting or unless the matter falls within one of the narrow exceptions. Consequently, any item not listed on this agenda will normally have to be delayed until the item can be made part of a posted agenda.

CALL TO ORDER: 6:00 pm

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

1. Roll Call: James Stream, Susanne Puffer, Gigi Welch, Linda Garcia, Donald Hawecker, and Virginia Werly

The meeting was chaired by Vice-chair Welch. Paul Van Doren arrived at 6:20 pm.

Absent (excused): Keller, Brosious, Robinson

Also present was Deputy City Attorney Neil Okasaki, Interim Fleet Director Susan Cox, and ADA Coordinator Monique Gordon.

2. **Introductions and Public Comment Period** - This is the portion of the meeting specifically set aside to invite your comments regarding any matter within the Commission's jurisdiction. *Individual audience participation is limited to 3 minutes.*

IRS Special Presenter Ali Frank and Residents Ty and Linda Lawyer were in attendance.

There was no public comment.

3. Minutes for the meeting of October 20, 2008

M/S Garcia/Werly and unanimous to approve the minutes as presented.

AYES: 6; (Stream, Puffer, Welch, Garcia, Hawecker, Werly); NOES – 0; ABSTAIN – 0; ABSENT 3 (Keller, Brosious, Robinson, Van Doren)

OLD BUSINESS

Item # 6 was heard directly after approval of the minutes in deference to the presenter.

4. Oral Report: Inland Empire Disabilities Expo October 23, 2008 (Hawecker)

Commissioner Hawecker noted that the Inland Empire Disabilities Expo was a great success. 1800 people attended and there were 106 volunteers.

5. Review and Comment: COD Annual Report to City Council – January 2009

Commissioner Garcia has done a wonderful job on the draft report. The report will be resubmitted in December for finalization.

M/S Stream/Hawecker and unanimous to approve the draft Council Report as presented.

AYES: 7; (Welch, Stream, Werly, Garcia, Van Doren, Puffer, Hawecker) NOES – 0; ABSTAIN – 0; ABSENT 3 (Keller, Brosious, Robinson)

NEW BUSINESS

6. Presentation: Living and Working with Disabilities – Tax Benefits and Credits (Ali Frank, IRS)

Ms. Frank is a tax consultant for the IRS. She came to explain the VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) Program which helps the public by providing free tax preparation services for the disabled community. She noted that about 83% of the disabled population does not file taxes because they do not believe they need to. The reality is that there are tax credits available to the working disabled. Often, disabled residents are do not file their taxes due to fear of losing their benefits.

Ms. Frank noted that the City of Riverside had been selected for a pilot project; to determine if it is possible to increase tax return filings within the community. She noted that there were 5 VITA sites and 2 AARP sites which would be open from February 1, 2009 until April 15, 2009. Tax returns would be prepared at these sites without cost to working residents, some by appointment only and others first come, first served.

During Ms. Ali's presentation, she noted that:

1. Many disabled did not file tax returns because they made less than \$17,500 and for that amount, there was no filing requirement.
2. Disabled residents should file because there is earned income tax credit available.
3. **Disabled residents must have earned income in order to receive the tax credit.**
4. **It is necessary to file a return in order to receive the earned income tax credit.**
5. Generally, if a working head of household earns more than \$11,250 or a single person earns less than \$8,750, they would not be required to file a return, but in order to receive the earned income credit, they need to file a return.
6. The head of household could earn a credit of from \$0 to \$4,718.
7. Filing a tax return would not affect eligibility for state or federal benefits.
8. Dependent child care expenses and itemized deductions for medical expenses are part of the earned income credit.
9. The tax return resulting from the earned income credit will not be added to income for next year.

The IRS is partnering with the Community Action Partnership of Riverside County in this initiative. Residents can file returns for the last three years and receive earned income credit for those periods.

Ms. Ali stated that the VITA program has been in existence for over 40 years, but the City of Riverside was being asked to help spread the word about the program, the availability of free help with tax preparation and the benefit of the tax credit. VITA is working directly with the community to educate the public about the programs and benefits available.

Commissioner Werly suggested that Ms. Ali contact the Inland Regional Center for help with publicizing the program. The San Bernardino Inland Regional Center is one of the 21 regional centers across the State of California that covers Riverside and San Bernadino counties and coordinates programs. Many working disabled are coordinated through the Inland Regional Center and would be an ideal vehicle to market the VITA program since they are involved with many different agencies for the working disabled.

In response to Commissioner Stream's question concerning the desired outcome for VITA, Ms. Ali responded that the desired outcome was for more people to get involved with filing tax returns, who would receive money back from the government, thereby stimulating the economy through increased spending.

January 30, 2009 would be the VITA EITC Awareness Day, which was an event the IRS would like to work with the COD on to publicize.

The COD suggested that Ms. Ali contact the Department of Rehabilitation within the City of Riverside. Parks, Recreation and Community Services and Libraries would be good locations to place VITA fliers. The COD requested 1,000 fliers to distribute to various City public counters.

7. Discussion: Greyhound Bus Terminal Closing

Commissioner Van Doren requested that this item be added to the agenda. He noted that quite a number of residents had called and emailed him because they are upset that the Riverside Greyhound station is closing and not relocating somewhere within the City. He noted that there are a large number of people with and without disabilities who depend on Greyhound for transportation. He was unsure of the relocation plan status or what the new location plans were. He suggested that the COD look into this and make a recommendation that a Greyhound station be located somewhere within the City.

Commissioner Werly noted that the proposed temporary location was Colton in San Bernardino County off Mr. Vernon Avenue, until a permanent location could be decided.

Commissioner Stream noted that the COD should gather more details concerning the plans for this issue. He assumed that the station was being moved outside the City due to negativity generally associated with bus services.

Commissioner Van Doren noted that although there are some problems at the Greyhound location, that increased law enforcement and security would improve the area. He didn't think that removing the service from the City due to negative activity or because of redevelopment was a good solution since people use and depend on the service as a transportation option. A city the size of Riverside should continue to support this vital service.

The COD discussed that there were a lot of drug and other crimes prevalent at the bus station site. The COD discussed that this relocation was possibly due to the City's redevelopment plans for the downtown area.

In response to Vice-Chair Welch's question concerning if the residents who had contacted Commissioner Van Doren had contacted the Mayor and their Councilperson, Mr. Van Doren responded that they had attempted to discuss this issue with their Council representative.

The COD discussed that public hearings had been conducted on this issue and the Council had decided to first relocate the terminal to the Metro Link Station before deciding on the temporary location in Colton. Commissioner Werly noted that the first location proposed by Council was to relocate the terminal near La Cadena. This meeting generated a large crowd from the La Cadena neighborhood in opposition to the Greyhound station being located there.

In response to the COD question concerning whether or not the fixed route RTA bus would be adjusted to transport residents to the temporary Greyhound location in Colton, Commissioner Werly noted that there had been some discussion on that subject. Since OMNI goes from San Bernardino into Riverside's downtown terminal, there was discussion about RTA possibly restructuring the fixed-route service that currently goes from Riverside to Loma Linda in order to serve the new, permanent Greyhound location.

Commissioner Van Doren suggested that the COD support the position that the Greyhound terminal remain in Riverside. He noted that there should be some acceptable location option available to keep the service within City limits.

Commissioner Werly noted that she did not see this as a disabled issue as much as a City issue. She noted that people with disabilities had accessible transportation service without using Greyhound in Riverside. She noted that there would be connectivity for people with disabilities to Greyhound.

The COD discussed that a decision had already been made by the City of Riverside to relocate the Greyhound terminal out of the City. The conclusion was that the permanent location for the new Greyhound terminal would be up to Greyhound. RTA has not been involved in the Greyhound relocation issue; this subject is strictly between Greyhound and the City of Riverside. Commissioner Werly noted that the property belonged to the City of Riverside, who controlled the property. The City has decided not to extend Greyhound's lease.

Commissioner Van Doren noted that if the City decided not to lease that property to Greyhound, then the City should help Greyhound find an alternate location within the City.

Commissioner Stream noted that he had been aware of the Council discussions concerning relocation but, until tonight, he had not been aware that the relocation was an issue within the disabled community.

Deputy City Attorney Okazaki noted that he had not been tracking this issue but was aware that Greyhound had been considering other sites. He noted that hundreds of residents had come to Council in opposition to the relocation on La Cadena, a site that the City considered a suitable alternative. He noted that the number of calls for Police services resulted in over 500 calls in the first 6 months of this year at the current Greyhound site, which constitutes a hub of crime. He was not present at Council meetings where this issue was discussed but was aware that the crime statistics had been presented to Council. He could not provide input about the Council decisions, but was fairly sure that the decision process was fairly far along if not yet finalized. He noted that it might be more appropriate to research the factors that went into the decision to relocate Greyhound.

Vice-Chair Welch suggested that in the meantime, Mr. Van Doren could address the Council and relay his concerns and the concerns of those who had contacted him. Commissioner Van Doren noted that the COD had a responsibility to look into issues related to people with disabilities. The COD discussed that more information was required on this issue and possibly the COD could request that the Council reconsider a location inside Riverside. He stressed that the COD should make this recommendation to Council.

M/S Van Doren/Hawecker to recommend that the City Council facilitate an alternative location for the Greyhound station within the City limits.

Vice-Chair Welch asked if Mr. Van Doren would address the Council for the COD. Mr. Van Doren noted that this was something that the COD would put in writing.

M/S Van Doren/ Hawecker to recommend to City Council that an alternate location for the Greyhound terminal be found within the City of Riverside.

AYES: - 6; (Stream, Puffer, Welch, Garcia, Hawecker, Van Doren); NOES – 0; ABSTAIN – 1 (Werly); ABSENT 3 (Keller, Brosious, Robinson)

8. 2009 Meeting Schedule

M/S Stream/Werly and unanimous to approve the 2009 meeting schedule with the correction that no December 2009 meeting will be held in deference to the holiday season.

AYES: 7; (Stream, Puffer, Welch, Garcia, Hawecker, Werly, Van Doren); NOES – 0; ABSTAIN – 0; ABSENT 3 (Keller, Brosious, Robinson,)

9. Discussion: Governor's Office of Emergency Services – Office for Access and Functional Needs (Van Doren)

Commissioner Van Doren noted that he attended a presentation with Rich Detillo, formally of the Department of Rehabilitation who is now head of the Governor's Office of Emergency Services. The program's 3 main focus areas are communication, transportation and disabled access for the emergency evacuation shelter. The presentation noted that the Office of Emergency Services and Homeland Security Department for the State would be combined as the Office for Access and Functional Needs. Commissioner Van Doren will provide updated information as it becomes available.

10. Discussion: Park and Recreation Community Centers

This item will be carried over to the meeting of December 8, 2008.

11. Next Steps: Community Outreach – Disabled Disaster Preparedness

- a. List of voluntary registries for the disabled

This item will be carried over to the meeting of December 8, 2008.

12. Report: Southern California Shakeup (Garcia)

Commissioner Garcia noted that the Golden Guardian will conduct the Southern California Shakeup on Saturday, November 15, 2008. There will be statewide participation in a mock earthquake disaster in order to test levels of emergency preparedness. Riverside County, Cities and businesses are participating in this exercise. Commissioner Garcia will be advocating for the disabled community as she participates in this exercise.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- A. RTA Quarterly ADA Committee Meeting, Monday, November 10 at the Bobby Bonds Park, 2060 University Avenue in Riverside, starting at 10 a.m.

Noted by the COD.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

13. ITEMS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION

Noted by the COD.

- A. Discussion Item: Public Service Announcement concerning Proper Placement of Trash Containers in conjunction with Public Works Solid Waste Division –Next Steps

14. INFORMATIONAL ITEM

- A. Performance Measurement from Code Enforcement concerning Sidewalk Obstruction by Trash Containers and Vehicles (standing report)

Date	Postcards Distributed by Code Enforcement
January 2008	70
February 2008	0
March 2008	0
April 2008	201
May 2008	0
June 2008	40
July 2008	20
August 2008	45
September 2008	135
October 2008	113

15. ADJOURNMENT: 7:30 pm