

MINUTES
Americans with Disabilities Act Committee
Public Service and Trust Commission
Friday, March 20, 2009

The Americans with Disabilities Act Committee met at 90 Washington Street, fourth-floor conference room, Hartford, Connecticut, on March 20, 2009.

In attendance: Patrick Caron, Chair; Sandra Lugo-Gines, Vice-Chair; Ann-Laurie Parent, member. Guests: Lynne Athas and Sascia Hayden, Judicial Branch Information Technology Division, and Attorney Steven J. Pelletier, Legal Services.

The meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m.

- I. The minutes of the February 6, 2009 meeting were read and approved by the members.

- II. Update on technology: There was a discussion between the members and Ms. Athas and Ms. Hayden about the possible installation or enabling of existing Microsoft accessibility software onto publicly available Branch computers, such as those at Court Service Centers. The software, which the Committee learned about on its tour in January of the New England Assistive Technology (NEAT) resource center in Hartford, would allow users with differing abilities to have better access to the information that is displayed on computer screens. The technology works by allowing the user to adjust font sizes, change contrast colors, and convert text into voice. The features are built in to the Microsoft Windows Platform but need to be activated and then deactivated by each user, which will require the purchase of another software. The Committee will contact NEAT to learn the name of the additional software.

Ms. Athas and Ms. Hayden then demonstrated a computer-based tutorial that they created to teach Branch employees, via the Intranet, about the newly launched Americans with Disabilities Act link from the Branch Internet site. As part of its charge, the Committee will recommend and develop training for Branch employees on how to provide access to people with disabilities. The Committee asked the trainers if it is possible to track statistical information similar to a Learning Management System (LMS) which will contain who reads and completes the online tutorial. In addition, it could also contain a "quiz" feature which will serve as a performance measure. The Committee will recommend this online tool.

- III. Update from Legal Services regarding Request for Accommodation and Grievance Process forms: Attorney Steven Pelletier of the Branch's Legal

Services unit is reviewing the existing grievance process and researching what forms that other state Judiciaries provide for a Request for Accommodation. Attorney Pelletier said he is reviewing the current grievance process and that it will likely be updated to a "Plain Language" style form. Attorney Pelletier has looked at Request for Accommodation forms from other states, including California, Florida, Tennessee, Rhode Island and New Jersey. He is considering how those forms could help shape the form that the Committee wants to create for Connecticut court users. The committee will find out if the entire Report on the Americans with Disabilities Act from 1993 needs to be updated and will seek clarification regarding External Affairs involvement in the Complaint Resolution Process.

IV. Update on ADA Compliance checklist: Ms. Lugo-Gines gave an update on a meeting she and support staff held with officials from the state Department of Public Works. DPW does the inspections of all state-leased buildings and part of those inspections is to review basic ADA compliance. The DPW furnished to Ms. Lugo-Gines a copy of the form their inspectors use. As part of the Committee's charge to ensure access to physical facilities, the Committee is going to go on an inspection with a DPW inspector to learn about what it is s/he is looking for in terms of ADA compliance. The DPW form's section about ADA compliance is based in part on the guidelines recommended by the U.S. Department of Justice's Checklist for Readily Achievable Barrier Removal.

V. Review of the Strategic Plan's strategies and activities for the ADA Committee: Ms. Lugo-Gines distributed to the Committee a copy of the activities, as identified in the 2007-2008 focus groups, that are recommended in order to achieve the strategies that support the Committee's outcome goal and charge. The Committee must present its report to the Public Service and Trust Commission in April. The Committee agreed that it needs to hold a working meeting to begin the compilation and writing process. Committee members agreed that every item listed has been addressed by the committee's work.

VI. Review of proposed outline for the final report: Ms. Lugo-Gines distributed to the Committee a proposed outline for the final report, which includes performance measures, strategies, and activities. The outline was created by Steven Marhefsky. Much work needs to be done in order to complete the report. The Committee will need to identify what activities and assessments have been done related to existing services; draft recommendations based on what needs to be achieved, including timelines.

VII. Schedule future meetings: The Committee will hold its next public meeting on Friday, April 17. A time and location will be announced and posted on the Committee's webpage.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:05 p.m.