

This is the Disability Rights Hawaii Newsletter for May 2011. It is available by email, print, Large Print, or Braille. Please contact ronald@hawaii.edu, or call 961-5601, to add or remove your name from the mailing list, or to change the format of your Newsletter.

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..... May 31 Meeting Announcement

Disability Rights Hawaii will meeting from 12:00 noon to 2:00 PM on Tuesday, March 31, 2011, in the Training Room of the ADRC Building, 1055 Kinoole Street, in Hilo. We will begin with the Annual Board of Directors meeting, which will choose Officers and Directors for the coming year and conduct any other needed business. This short meeting will be followed by a General Meeting, in which we will discuss local accessibility problems. At 1:00 PM we will be visited by Sam Nagasawa and her colleagues who represent Aloha Independent Living Hawaii, a new disability services organization on the Big Island. Sam will describe the services they offer.

..... March 29 Meeting Notes

Meeting Notes for the 3/29/2011 DRH meeting:

Present: Daniel Grant-Johnson, Linda Toms Barker, Marianne Hodapp, Martin Hodapp, Donald Haumea, Gail Yoshishige, Teri Spinola Campbell, Miho Kusachi, Ron Amundson, Tiffany Kai (Mass Transit)

Danny opened the meeting, and introductions went around the table. Laura gave the Treasurer's report (small changes from last meeting).

Ron gave the Secretary's report, which was primarily about the new MacDonald's Restaurant on Kinoole Street and problems with its exterior design. Danny had identified a serious problem at the restaurant: a very steep ramp which had been installed at the downhill corner of the parking lot, near the corner of Haili Street and Kilauea Avenue. Ron went to the restaurant to measure the ramp, and do an exterior survey. He met Owen Nakano, the manager of the restaurant, who showed him around. The ramp is clearly inaccessible, and it may be illegal to install such a ramp. That was our main concern. However, several other issues came up, some of them identified by Owen. One was that there was no crosswalk across the exit aisle of the drive-up window, and pedestrians had to cross that aisle to get to their cars; another was that one of the 'detectable warnings' (yellow plastic pads with raised dots) near that location was not fastened down, so wheelchairs could get stuck against it and people who were walking could trip on it. Finally, Ron recommended that a sign be placed at the entry to the walkway that extends beside the building down to Kilauea Avenue, because someone in a wheelchair could go all the way down that sidewalk before discovering that it was blocked by a stairway. Owen said that he would forward

the recommendations to his supervisors, but that the decisions were made higher up the chain of command. (They seem to use a very military system of authority.)

Martin reported another problem he had encountered at UHH: the air conditioning in the new building (UCB -112) was so low -- temperature was 68 *on the control* -- that his fingers couldn't operate the controls on his wheelchair. The school seemed to be unable to control the temperature on its air conditioning system.

Martin also described how his Social Security PASS program was cancelled, claiming that he had been overpaid. He got the system reapproved, but no letter was sent to tell him that he was reapproved. Finally the local office wrote to him ...

Chris described his survey of the new apartment building on Ponahawai that looked inaccessible. It seems to be violating Fair Housing laws. Danny filed an official complaint as a client for HDRC. HDRC received Chris's site survey but he's not sure what the next step will be. Danny will call and see what's going on.

We discussed Betsy Whitney's recent tragic death. Teri, Donald, and Sheryl Nelson went to the memorial service for Betsy. Her husband Tom gave a eulogy. Betsy died of a pulmonary embolism with no warning and no history of heart disease. Tom heard her gasping for breath in the night and called an ambulance. The last thing she said before she died was "I love you Tom."

We had a long discussion of Betsy Whitney, her life and her recent death. The loss of her business, Dolphin Press, will cause problems in the community. Betsy provided free Braille transcriptions of the DRH Newsletter to several of our members and to other community organizations.

Donald reported problems with Medicaid because his inheritance from his mother's recent death. His "spend-down" is \$957 per month. If you're on Medicaid, don't find any loose money -- it'll cost you.

Teri reported that the new ADA Title 3 Regulations go into effect as of March 15, 2011. One of the new regulations is that people with wheelchairs should be able to go anywhere that pedestrians can go. We wondered what the implications would be for this -- no more 'steps up' to get onto a portion of a restaurant, so that people with wheelchairs are restricted as to where they can eat? One factor might be that when you have a pedestrian route, wheelchairs must be allowed on it. If so, the new ramp at the MacDonalds parking lot is a clear violation -- it is 3 times as steep as allowed on an accessible route.

Tiffany Kai from Mass Transit came to speak to us about the Mass Transit projects. One is the Bus Stop/Bus Shelter program. They are soon receiving 8 prefabricated bus shelters. 5 will be placed in Hilo and 3 in West Hawaii. 33 more shelters are being planned. RFP for shelters is in Public Works. They have settled on 100 bus stop locations. They'll put up signs at those

locations. Senator Inouye gave \$5 million for capital improvements. This is going to build a new yard for all Mass Transit services and units (buses). \$1M for buses, \$4M for baseyard and facilities.

Questions and answers for/from Tom:

- 1) Tom has talked about a paratransit system. Is that still being planned? (Tiffany will take this question to Tom.)
- 2) Tom has discussed buying an accessible taxi, and leasing to a driver. Is this still being planned?
- 3) We had earlier heard that putting in permanent bus stops would change the County's Transit Plan from a "commuter" system to a "fixed route" system, and place more rules on how the system operates. Is the County going towards a "fixed route" system? Will it change the rules?
- 4) It was reported that the County is planning on charging for bus rides in the future. Probably the rides will be \$1.

In another discussion, Teri said that the Department of Justice has eliminated the rule about detectable warnings, but the Department of Transportation has not. So there may be inconsistencies regarding their use.

Martin made two suggestions for future DRH activities. First, we should consider marching (and rolling) in the Christmas parade. He has an idea for a banner. He also said that we should get involved with the Downtown Improvement Association. There was discussion about that; some DRH members had gone to some of the meetings. One reason we should stay in contact with them is to make sure that the Black & White Night bands do not steal the accessible parking spaces in Downtown Hilo, as they have several times in the past.