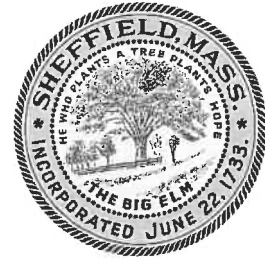




Town of Sheffield
Commission on Disabilities
Town Hall – 21 Depot Square
P.O. Box 325
Sheffield, Massachusetts 01257



Friday, January 28, 2022
Virtual Meeting Via Zoom

Commission Members

Present: Laura Grunfeld, Chair
Tod MacKenzie
Pam Mercer
Gail Mullen
Absent: Priscilla Rueger
Guests: Sarah Nechamen

The meeting was called to order at 10:42 AM and was chaired by Grunfeld. The meeting is being recorded.

1.) Disabled Persons Protection Commission (DPPC): Visitor, Sarah Nechamen, Outreach and Training Specialist with the DPPC gave a presentation. The DPPC is an independent state agency tasked with investigating cases of abuse against adults with disabilities who are between the ages of 18 and 59 years. They define disability as needing assistance with daily needs. The DPPC investigates when abuse is perpetrated by a caregiver of any sort, family or professional, paid or not. Anyone wanting to make a report may call the hotline at 1-800-426-9009. They are open 24 hours a day, every day. Other age groups report abuse to the Department of Children and Families, birth to 17, or the Executive Office of Elder Affairs, 60 and up. An investigation is conducted. The results of the investigation are that support may be suggested for the person with the disability or the caregiver. Sometimes the caregiver is overwhelmed and needs support or respite services so that they can take a break, or they may need more training or a change in policies. The person with the disability may need health care counseling, transportation, peer support, therapy or other support. The sexual assault unit within the DPPC gives specific support for survivors of sexual abuse. Other agencies collaborate to provide the support to victims and caregivers. The police check all reports for criminal activity.

2.) Approval of November 19 and December 17 minutes: By consensus, the November 19 and December 17 minutes were approved. (The December 17 meeting was cancelled due to lack of a quorum).

3.) Budget: All-terrain wheelchair: Grunfeld and Mercer reported that Selectboard member Rene Wood secured a grant from the Massachusetts Office on Disability, that will fund the purchase of an all-terrain wheelchair. The chair will be housed at the Library as part of their Library of Things and they will handle loaning it out and housing it. Last year, Mercer presented the idea of the Town having an all-terrain wheelchair available for citizens who want to explore accessible trails in the Berkshires, and then researched the best chair for the purpose. The Grit Freedom Chair can be seen here: www.gogrit.us. It travels on sand, snow, and over curbs and roots. Tires are easy to get at the local bike shop. There was discussion about ways to spread the word about the chair. Ideas included: invite the media to a ribbon cutting, piggyback on another event like the COD Annual Picnic or the Sheffield Fair, let other commissions know about the availability of the chair, write an article for the Sheffield Times, etc.

- 4.) **Library's emergency drill update:** We are still awaiting word that the drill has been scheduled.
- 5.) **Town Accessibility Handbook update:** Mercer and MacKenzie are not yet ready to report.
- 6.) **Sheffield Times' article:** Ideas included an article about the Grit Chair and an article about the Disabled Persons Protection Commission.
- 7.) **Annual Report:** Grunfeld reported that the COD Annual Report is due on February 11. The COD okayed Grunfeld submitting the report.
- 8.) **ADA Self-Evaluation Update:** The report should be updated soon.
- 9.) **Member's Items:** Grunfeld reported that former COD member Dale Alden has included the COD on correspondence regarding keeping the newly installed accessible sidewalks in Ashley Falls clear of snow during the winter and from being overgrown during the summer. The COD sent an email of appreciation for keeping them in the loop. Most recently, Alden wrote to the MOD to ask for their assistance in getting the sidewalks cleared of snow. / Mullen reported that she will be in touch with the New Marlborough COD to invite them to our meeting or see how she can assist. / Discussion about the COD Annual Picnic included the possibility of inviting Sarah Nechamen to do a training about the DPPC. This year we would invite all CODs in Berkshire County and ask each to do a report on their activities.
- 10.) **Visitors' Items:** See the first agenda item.
- 11.) **Items for next meeting's agenda.** Approval of minutes, update on library evacuation drill, Town Accessibility Handbook update, Sheffield Times articles, ADA Self-Evaluation working session.
- 12.) **Date, time, place for next meeting:** Friday, February 18, 10:30 AM. Whether the meeting will be virtual or in-person will be determined closer to the date.
- 13.) **Communications:** There were none.
- 14.) **Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 11:49 AM.

Respectfully submitted:



Laura Grunfeld
Chair, Commission on Disabilities