



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



Friday, September 6, 2019
Bushnell Sage Library, upstairs meeting room
Meeting officially opened at 10:00 AM

Commission Members

Present: Laura Grunfeld, Chair
Dale Alden
Rick Brown
Gail Mullen
Priscilla Rueger
Absent: None
Guests: None

Grunfeld called the Commission on Disabilities (COD) meeting officially open at 10:00 AM.

1.) Approval of August 16 and June 27 minutes: By consensus, the August 16, 2019 minutes were approved. With the approved changes June 27, 2019 minutes are approved.

2.) MOD Grant Suggestions: The following is a list of ideas to suggest for inclusion in the MOD grant.

- a. Evacuation CHAIRS for Town Hall and Library
- b. Assistive Listening Systems for Town Hall, Library, School, and Police
- c. Signage for Town Center, Town Hall, Police Department, and Library parking
- d. Check all Town buildings for Visual alarms
- e. Emergency pull cords in Senior Center bathrooms

3.) Town Center Parking: “The COD would like to reiterate its support of the Complete Streets application. The COD has been preparing a report for the Town regarding how to improve accessible parking and other items that improve safety in the Town. We request that the Town consider the COD’s recommendations during the process of applying for Complete Streets funding.” The COD asked that Grunfeld email this to LaBombard and Wood.

The COD discussed a clarification email that Dougan wrote on September 4. Dougan stated that the Massachusetts Access Board does not allow the use of a driveway to access a sidewalk. Where the access aisle of the accessible parking spaces abut the sidewalk, curb cuts should be provided. Text from his email is below as Addendum A.

The group discussed the urgency of addressing that vehicles are still driving too fast and passing on the right through the crosswalks in Sheffield, which especially compromises the safety of those crossing Route 7. The COD would like to bring these concerns to the DOT.

The COD read an email from citizen Dorothy Weaver regarding long-term planning and visioning for the future. Weaver’s suggestions included using “green” materials rather than concrete or cement to construct

the sidewalks, planting more trees, making the town more pedestrian, biker, and wheelchair-user friendly, etc. Text from her email is below as Addendum B. Grunfeld also passed on that Weaver has talked about towns that have no curbs, with sidewalks and streets at the same level and all is accessible. Wheel stops would be positioned at the head of parking spots.

Conversation followed about the importance of thinking of accessibility and sustainability when initially building and making improvements, not after the fact. The importance of public transportation is part of the mix. Various opinions were expressed about including sustainability, or not, along with our accessibility recommendations.

The problems with the new Town Hall accessible parking spots were discussed and various solutions considered. The COD would like to ask Town Hall to fix the problems and will put together a communication with suggestions.

4.) Members' Items:

- a. Alden: He spoke with LaBombard and we may have a volunteer recorder for the minutes. This person does not have to be a member of the COD. To be discussed at the next meeting.
- b. Mullin: She reminded us about the Open Meeting Law training on Wednesday September 18 at the Senior Center. Grunfeld will be out of town. Mullin will attend. Others will attend if possible.
- c. Brown: Fair prep and training. Brown has a slide show and computer and he has prepared a survey. Rueger will be attending and staffing the table some of the time. Mullin will transport all COD materials to the Fair. Grunfeld has been in contact with other organizations asking for brochures. She will be handling accessible parking at the Fair.

5.) Items for next meeting's agenda: Friday, Sept 6, 2pm, at the library. This meeting is to focus on completing the recommendations for the Town Center accessible parking. Friday, October 18: Sheffield Fair Wrap Up and Town Center parking recommendations. Monitoring ADA Self-Evaluation Progress. Work Plan priorities.

6.) Date, time, place for next meeting: October 18, 2019, 10:30 pm. Sheffield Library.

7.) Communications: Brochures from organizations for the Fair. Memo from LaBombard regarding Open Meeting training. Email from Dougan. Email from Weaver.

8.) Adjournment: Mullen moved to close the meeting. Rueger seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 12:14PM.

Respectfully submitted:



Laura Grunfeld
Chair, Commission on Disabilities

Addendum A & B on following pages

ADDENDUM A: September 4, 2019 Jeff Dougan Email to Laura Grunfeld

I know we discussed the curb cuts a little during the walk-through. Here's my suggestion:

1. If the parking is going to be improved, consideration should be made to ensure the accessible parking is provided where curb cuts are present to reduce the access via driveway routes.
2. If the sidewalks along that area are improved, renovated, or altered, then curb cuts will need to be incorporated wherever an access aisle abuts a curb reveal, or, re-orientating the space to have the access aisle not use a driveway. The MAAB does not allow the use of a driveway to access a sidewalk.
3. From our last conversation, I believe we left it that the COD was going to offer some suggestions. I think the suggestions should be pushing for providing appropriate curb cuts where the access aisles of the accessible parking spaces abut the sidewalk. This would be what would be required if this were renovated or newly constructed.

This may make a good Project Grant Application through MOD's Municipal ADA Improvement Grant Program... to fund the sidewalk replacement (improvement) and parking reconfiguration. Just a thought!

ADDENDUM B: August 23, 2019 Dorothy Weaver Email for the COD

Re the Commission on Disabilities campaign to change curbs and sidewalks etc... they need to research the materials that are not CO2 heavy in their manufacture (e.g. cement) or that are made of fossil fuels or petro-chemicals (e.g., asphalt, plastics, hundreds of chemicals). True cost accounting is wise. Members of the Commission are citizens who influence policy for everyone and the following information affects everyone.

There are some soy- or corn- based plastics that might work in the construction of walkways. Materials from mycelia, "waste" wood, etc ... are used by architects. Tree Hugger and Grist are sources that send out email information. I have info in my email Folders you can use. Some architects have succeeded in finding and using truly "green" materials.

Many towns and cities of the world have pedestrian-friendly streets without cars or curbs -- all one level. (Tree Hugger is one of many sources.) Foundation drainage directs the runoff for the use of trees and other plants.

Throughout a town, trees give cooling shade and hold the soil, enrich the soil, restore health to the river, sequester carbon, provide habitat for birds, bees, and butterflies, and help to save habitat for wild animal life. Every part of the town affects the whole town and the whole planet. The layout of a town for people, gardens and trees instead of vehicles can be varied and quite new, fitting the safety and comfort of human beings.

Forest will cool a whole town, conserve moisture, provide fruits, nuts, shelter, clean air, good company for people. "Forest gardens" are of this kind. There can be small coves throughout the town, where people meet to picnic, sit to talk, rest during their walks. Fewer vehicles might allow fewer roads and more paths -- friendly for walkers and bikers, kids in strollers and people who use wheel chairs and other aids. The better soil will be for small regenerative farms and common gardens, with buildings on land not needed for forest or food. Studies indicate that many diverse species are needed for adaptation as the climate warms. The lag after CO2 enters the atmosphere to the time it has absorbed the heat it can hold is about ten years.* After we stop using coal or oil or natural gas/propane for something, the heat keeps on increasing.

To make plans that allow survival of this place, it means learning more about this place. It comes clear that we cannot continue to have and do as usual and at the same time give necessary care to the land. We will add wider diversity to our local ecosystem. We will need more forest and species from colder and warmer climates both, to survive high temperatures and extreme weather events. James Hansen explains how the global heat can lead to regions of cold:

http://www.columbia.edu/~jeh1/mailings/2016/20160322_IceMeltPaper.Abbreviation.pdf

In a new economy, we will have free home solar panels (the grid breaks down in rural areas), free transportation by electric vehicles, rail, boat..., free communications, free education, free water... at much lower cost than we pay now for private ownership. There is need for plenty of information, democratic participation, good communications, a change in the idea of management (change in the forms we have for making community decisions).

In Sheffield as forest, planning will place human construction to allow the best care for the watershed. This will give residents the best living conditions possible as the climate warms and the heat waves intensify. We are part of the ecosystem. It shapes our thoughts to pay attention -- it improves our sense of place.

The different soils and slopes, wetland and waterways that drain into the Housatonic River need a new survey to determine the best care.** The Housatonic drains into the Atlantic Ocean where pollutants sicken the sea life and create dead zones. With restoration of the forested watershed, especially of the flood plain, runoff will be reduced and not carry soil and poisons from Sheffield into the River.

*After that, the heat moves into the ocean for about 10,000 years and from the ocean into bedrock for about 400,000 years. Earth's climate, the strange circulation, severe storms, drought, fires, extinctions will continue for some 100,000 to 200,000 years and slack off over the following 200,000 years. The ocean holds about 93% of the heat already and when it can hold no more, the atmosphere will retain the heat emitted from the surface.

**Survey by scientists from The Woods Hole Research Center or from the U Mass Climate System Research Center would likely provide the most reliable guidance for Sheffield. The State of MA and non-profit environmental organizations have disqualified themselves.