



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



Friday, June 19, 2020
Virtual meeting by conference call

Commission Members

Present: Laura Grunfeld, Chair
Rick Brown
Gail Mullen
Priscilla Rueger
Absent: None
Guests: Pam Mercer, Ted Pitman

Grunfeld chaired the meeting. She called the Commission on Disabilities (COD) meeting officially open at 10:33 AM.

Grunfeld read the required opening statement: *In accordance with Gov. Bakers 3/12/20 Order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting law, and the Governor's 3/15/20 Order limiting the number of people who may gather in one place, this meeting of the Town of Sheffield Commission on Disabilities, is being conducted via remote participation. No in-person attendance of members of the public is permitted (other than virtually), but every effort will be made to ensure you can participate in this meeting. When we hear by a ping sound that someone has joined the meeting we will ask that person to introduce themselves.*

Mullen is delayed this morning and hopes to join us at 11AM. The group agreed to push #3 on the agenda, "Guest and member introductions," until Mullen joined the meeting.

1.) Approval of Feb 14 minutes: By consensus, the February 14, 2020 minutes were approved.

2.) Juneteenth acknowledgment: The following was introduced by Grunfeld but with feedback from Brown, revised to make this statement: *Being a commission committed to inclusion for all, we want to acknowledge that today is Juneteenth, a day to celebrate the freeing of the slaves. We still have a long way to go to become a truly inclusive nation that provides liberty and justice for all but we hope that with recent events, building of awareness, and by each of us taking individual responsibility for doing so, we will be able to reach that goal.*

Rueger stated that she would have no objection to making Juneteenth a national holiday and the other members agreed.

3.) Update: Complete Streets: As the pandemic caused a postponement of the March meeting, when the COD had planned to put together a list of recommendations for the Complete Streets project to present to the Selectboard, individual COD members presented their own lists to the Selectboard. Rueger recommended that the lighting in the Town and Senior Center parking lots be improved. Grunfeld made the following recommendations:

- a. Cook Road and Berkshire School Road Sidewalks:

- i. For safety, maintain a green strip between roadway and sidewalks along Route 7 and Berkshire School Road.
- b. Depot Square Project:
 - i. Use a green, sustainable, permeable material for sidewalks rather than asphalt, concrete, or cement.
 - ii. Rather than curbs, consider a single level with wheel stops in the center of town. This would eliminate the need for curb cuts.
 - iii. The Commission on Disabilities recommends one accessible parking spot for each block.
 - iv. Make sure that access aisles do not require that a person using a wheelchair travel on a roadway or driveway to get to the sidewalk from an accessible parking space.
 - v. A cautionary note that granite curbs were problematic in Great Barrington in that sharp corners popped tires at corners as well as along the street.
 - vi. Include trees and water fountain in planning, if possible.
- c. Town Hall Parking Lot Project:
 - i. Regarding the new accessible parking spots on the south side of Town Hall: Rather than two parking spots, reduce to one parking spot next to the ramped entrance. A person with a mobility disability may exit either the passenger or driver side of the vehicle.

4.) Cancellation Legislative Breakfast: Due to the virus, the breakfast, scheduled for March 29, was cancelled and the registration fee for our attendance was refunded.

5.) Discuss Accessibility Survey: Brown and Rueger conducted an accessibility survey for citizens of Sheffield at the Sheffield Fair in September of 2019. Brown reported that 11 people responded to the survey so it was not statistically significant but it did bring up some good points that the COD may want to pursue. Two people talked about entrances to businesses being difficult to navigate with high thresholds and narrow doorways. Grunfeld said that while the focus of the COD was on Town facilities and services, providing accessibility training for local businesses could be very helpful. Other items such as sidewalks and transportation were under the Town's purview. There was discussion about sending out a survey to all households. Grunfeld will talk it over with the Town Administrator to find out how many households there are so that we can put together a budget. We noted the importance of putting something interesting on the outside of the envelope so that people would actually open it. We agreed that waiting until we had the worst of the virus behind us would help raise the citizen participation level.

Possible actions resulting from this conversation:

- When the pandemic is not as pressing, send out a survey to every household.
- Mercer is interested in updating the document made by former COD members Dave & Nan Wells, listing accessible transportation available in Sheffield.
- Mercer is interested in researching accessible trails available in southern Berkshire County and writing an article for the Sheffield Times.
- Grunfeld to send comment regarding transportation at the Senior Center to Kathie Loring, Senior Center Executive Director.
- Provide training for businesses open to the public in Sheffield.

6.) **Interruption Of Meeting:** The meeting was being held on the conference call number given to us by the Town. At 11:12 AM a caller came on that was part of another commission. They had plans to start a meeting shortly on the same number. As the COD had fewer members, we hung up and reconvened on Grunfeld's conference call number, leaving instructions with the caller to give out our new number should any other member of the public be looking for our meeting. Grunfeld to notify the Town Administrator.

7.) **Update: Sheffield Times Article 6/20:** As we do not have an article in the works we will postpone submitting anything until the next issue. When we are ready with the survey we will alert citizens through the Sheffield Times.

8.) **Update: Straw Ban:** This is tabled until someone can take this on as their project. Brown to investigate the status of the legislation and present a summation of the bill to the COD.

9.) **Update: ADA Self-Evaluation:** We are to review the Self-Evaluation and see what updates are needed. To discuss at the next meeting.

10.) **Guest & Member Introductions:** We asked Mercer to introduce herself and give her reasons for being interested in serving on the Commission. Then we went around the group and each person stated their reasons. Being able to help, making a difference in the world, and accessibility is a civil right, were some of the reasons stated by the group. We appreciate Mercer's enthusiasm.

11.) **Members' Items:** Grunfeld: The Sheffield Fair is cancelled due to the pandemic. Grunfeld had inquired with the Town about holding a socially-distanced and masked in-person meeting but was told not yet. Grunfeld to check on FY 2020-21 budget request. Mullen: Inquired about what to do with stored COD records. She will hold onto them until she and other COD member(s) can go through the records to cull out any duplicates, reducing storage needs. Then they will be moved to the Town basement. Mullen to make a thank you card for Alden who resigned from the COD to focus on other projects. Mullen agreed to be the COD Treasurer.

12.) **Visitors' Items:** Mercer is looking forward to joining the COD.

13.) **Items for next meeting's agenda:** Straw ban legislation update, ADA Self-Evaluation update, Accessibility Survey update, Treasurer update, Accessible transportation and trails update.

14.) **Date, time, place for next meeting:** Friday July 24, 10:30 AM. By conference call.

15.) **Communications:** None

16.) **Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 12:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted:



Laura Grunfeld
Chair, Commission on Disabilities