



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



Friday, July 24, 2020
Virtual meeting by conference call

Commission Members

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

Grunfeld chaired the meeting. She called the Commission on Disabilities (COD) meeting officially open at 10:38 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.*

1.) New Member Welcome: We welcomed Pam Mercer to the COD. We are excited to have her on the team.

2.) Approval of June 19 minutes: By consensus, the June 19, 2020 minutes were approved.

3.) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Design Review Committee: Grunfeld reported that both Brown and Grunfeld had joined the committee and were awaiting the first meeting. The committee will review designs for accessibility updates to the Town Park restroom, the Bushnell Sage Library accessibility to the patio from the basement and the entrance to the library, and accessibility to the Police Station.

4.) Straw Ban Legislation Update: A resident of Great Barrington, Julie Berger, asked the COD to take a stand against the straw ban bill currently in the Massachusetts legislature. Brown researched the status of the joint Massachusetts Senate and House bill and reported that the bill would have to be resubmitted in January and that it is a year or two away from any consideration. He said that if anything happens with the issue, it would be at the Town level. Sheffield is not considering such an action. Mullen spoke with Great Barrington's Town Manager, Mark Pruhenski, who said they are a year or two away from bringing it to the Town Annual Meeting. Because no one in the Town of Sheffield has brought this to our attention and since any action anywhere else is in the distant future, by consensus we agreed to put

discussion about this topic aside as we need to focus on more time-sensitive issues. Grunfeld will follow up with Berger.

5.) Massachusetts Office on Disabilities (MOD) Grant Suggestions: Select Board Chair Wood said she was preparing information for the MOD grant application and was looking for suggestions for smaller items or projects that could be completed by June 2021. Suggestions from the group included emergency evacuation chairs for the Town Hall and the Library, an emergency pull cord for the downstairs bathroom at the Senior Center (upstairs is already equipped), motion activated outside lighting at the Senior Center, and a trail wheelchair designed to traverse rough outdoor trails which would be available for loan through the library or Town Hall. Mercer is to look into what trail chair would work best keeping in mind that it needs to fold up to fit into a vehicle easily. Grunfeld will submit the list to Wood.

6.) Accessibility Survey Update: Town Clerk Felecie Joyce says that as of today we have 2,143 households, both occupied and unoccupied. We would be mailing surveys to all households. We will put the project on pause until the COVID situation has calmed and we are ready to take action.

7.) Annual Town Meeting Concerns: Grunfeld heard from many of Sheffield's citizens with concerns about attending the Annual Town Meeting that was held the evening of June 29. Senior citizens, people with disabilities, people with medical conditions, and people concerned about being indoors with other people during this time of COVID felt they could not safely attend the Town Meeting and participate in the voting process. Rueger mentioned that she has difficulty finding accessible parking when attending Town Meetings. Brown and Mullen feel it is a good place for town participation but we need to make it more accessible and make remote participation possible. Grunfeld feels the process of requiring that people be present at a particular location at a particular time to vote on Town issues in itself discriminates against people with disabilities, not to mention others who have difficulty getting to the meeting for a variety of reasons. She feels that allowing remote participation at the meetings, followed by voting over a period of time in-person or by mail, as other elections are conducted, would be a more democratic and inclusive process. The COD feels they are not up to pursuing such a big challenge as changing the voting process, although Grunfeld may follow up individually.

8.) Covered Bridge Park Accessibility: Mercer reported that while the Covered Bridge Lane to Boardman Street is somewhat accessible, boulders were recently placed on the east side of the bridge that block easy access for wheelchairs. Grunfeld and Mercer performed a site visit. We are not sure if the boulders are on Town or private property. Grunfeld and Mercer reported the obstacle to Town Administrator LaBombard and suggested moving two of the boulders 36" apart to allow passage. Mercer will call Tammy Blackwell, Board of Assessors, to research if the boulders are on Town or private property and, if privately owned, find out by whom. Mercer will also contact LaBombard for an update.

9.) Sheffield Times Article: Mercer will write an article to be submitted to the Sheffield Times by the August 15 deadline. Grunfeld will assist with editing the article. Mercer plans to submit a series of articles about accessible trails in the surrounding area.

10.) ADA Self-Evaluation: The COD will update the ADA Self-Evaluation at the next meeting.

11.) Treasurer's Update: Treasurer Mullen reported that the COD has \$300 available in FY 2020-21 and has yet to spend any of that money. Printing and mailing the survey will likely use most of the budget.

12.) Members' Items: Mullen to make a thank you card for Alden. Grunfeld to pick up COD mail.

13.) Visitors' Items: No visitors were present.

- 14.) **Items for next meeting's agenda:** ADA Self-evaluation, MOD recommendations.
- 15.) **Date, time, place for next meeting:** Friday August 21, 9:30 AM. At the pavilion in person (if allowed), or by conference call, to be determined.
- 16.) **Communications:** None
- 17.) **Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 12:26 PM.

Respectfully submitted:



Laura Grunfeld
Chair, Commission on Disabilities