



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



Friday, March 19, 2021
Virtual meeting by conference call

Commission Members

Present: Laura Grunfeld, Chair
Rick Brown
Pam Mercer
Gail Mullen
Priscilla Rueger
Absent: All present
Guests: Jeanne Bachetti, Treasurer, Town of Great Barrington COD

The meeting was called to order at 10:32AM and was chaired by Grunfeld.

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.) **Approval of February 19, 2021 minutes:** By consensus, the February 19, 2021 minutes were approved.
- 2.) **Sheffield Times' Articles:** Mercer's Accessible Outdoors column for the May/June issue will be about the accessible trail at Lake Mansfield. Mullen is working on a short article regarding the form that people with disabilities may submit to the Police Department so that, when responding to a call, emergency personnel are alerted to the presence of people with disabilities and are prepared to assist properly. She will also add the information that when people use a TTY to call 911, the TTY does not provide the name and location of the caller. The caller should give the operator this information right away.
- 3.) **Continuation of ADA Self-Evaluation reports from Mercer, Mullen, and Grunfeld:** In this discussion, items from the ADA Self-Evaluation that are not already in process, are assigned a priority level of 1, 2, or 3, (1 being the highest priority). Mercer's report on the Senior Center and Fire Department was completed at the previous meeting. At this meeting, Mullen reported on the Library and Police Station and Grunfeld reported on the Town Hall, Town Center, and Town Park.

Library and Town Hall Emergency Plans: The Town Hall does not have an emergency evacuation plan and needs to put one together. The Library's plan should be updated to include people with disabilities. Mullen reminded us that the Library Board of Trustees has said that they do not want the staff responsible

for lifting people with disabilities. The place of refuge or staging area needs to be identified. When the plan is drawn up, the Fire and Police Chiefs need to assess if the plan is good, and all emergency personnel need to be informed as to what the plan is. Library staff will need training. Because this is a matter of safety, this is deemed to be a PRIORITY #1 topic.

Library and Town Hall Evacuation sleds: As far as the COD knows, training has not been provided for Town staff regarding proper use of the evacuation sleds. The COD recommends that the evacuation sleds be replaced by evacuation chairs as they are better suited for the job. Both the Town Hall and the Library need evacuation chairs. The Library should have two chairs. The one positioned in the south stairway should operate going up as well as down so as to assist with getting people out of the basement as well as down from the second floor. Because this is a matter of safety, this is deemed to be a PRIORITY #1 topic.

Library and Town Hall Bathrooms: The bathrooms have two problems that are easily rectified. 1) The trash receptacles are too large and may obstruct the pathway of a wheelchair. 2) The towel dispensers are not hung within the proper reach range for someone who is seated in a wheelchair. Both of these issues are easy fixes by purchasing smaller trash cans and by moving the paper towel dispensers. This topic is given a PRIORITY #2.

Town Accessibility Information: The Town Hall needs to publish information about their accessibility and about the accessibility available at each Town facility. The Town has asked the COD to put this together. Brown is researching how other towns do this. This is deemed to be a PRIORITY #1 topic.

Police Department, TTY Emergency Calls: If a caller uses a TTY to call 911, the system does not recognize the caller's name and location. The COD would like to bring this problem to the attention of the 911 administration to see if the problem can be rectified. The COD will ask Chief Munson for contact information. Because this is a matter of safety, this is deemed to be a PRIORITY #1 topic.

Police Department "RAD Self Defense" and "Kops and Kids" Pamphlets: The pamphlets regarding these programs should be updated to include information regarding accessibility. This is deemed a PRIORITY #2 topic.

Town Park Playground: The playground only has two accessible play elements. Both are swings that can only be used by young, small children. Until this playground is made truly accessible with many more accessible play elements, children with disabilities will not be able to participate. For inclusion reasons, this is deemed a PRIORITY #1 topic.

Town Center Sidewalks and Accessible Parking: The brick sidewalks need replacing as they are dangerous, and the accessible parking, curb cuts, and cross walks need to be redesigned. The Town plans to include this in the next round of the Complete Streets grant however, the cost of the engineering is not covered by that grant so additional funding needs to be identified. The COD deems this is a PRIORITY #1 topic.

Town Hall Accessible Parking: The accessible parking spots on the south side of Town Hall are problematic as it is not easy to exit one side of the vehicle. This is deemed a PRIORITY #2 topic.

Town Hall and Library Website Access, Use of PDF for Meeting Notifications: A professional needs to evaluate the website and the PDFs to see if they are or are not accessible and what is needed, if anything. Because this is about effective communication, this is deemed a PRIORITY #1 topic.

Town Hall Assistive Listening Devices: The assistive listening devices at the Senior Center need to be available for use at the Town Hall, the Library and at Town Meetings. Because this is about effective communication, this is deemed a PRIORITY #1 topic.

Grunfeld was given permission to email the Select Board with the priority list.

4.) Members' Items:

- i) Grunfeld reported that she had spent some time speaking with Jeanne Bachetti, Treasurer for the newly formed Great Barrington COD.
- ii) Our members may want to attend meetings in other towns such as Great Barrington, Pittsfield, and New Marlborough.
- iii) Group discussion around hosting a multi-town COD picnic to celebrate the anniversary of the ADA (July 26). Ideas: Provide a short but truly helpful training plus social time. As a group, Chairs of each COD decide what agenda should be. Action Items: 1. Get list of CODs from Mass. Office on Disability. Focus on South County. 2. Reach out to chairs. 3. Invitation of collegiately.

5.) Visitors' Items: Jeanne Bachetti, Treasurer of the newly formed Great Barrington COD, was in attendance.

6.) Items for next meeting's agenda: COD picnic. Grunfeld: Document regarding priorities to the Select Board. Mullen and Mercer: Sheffield Times articles. Brown: Town handbook research. Mullen to be the action item reporter.

7.) Date, time, place for next meeting: Wednesday, April 14, 10:30 AM. This will be a virtual meeting, by Zoom and conference call.

8.) Communications: None

9.) Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 12:34 PM.

Respectfully submitted:



Laura Grunfeld
Chair, Commission on Disabilities