



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



Friday, June 22, 2021
Bushnell Sage Library, downstairs meeting room

Commission Members

Present: Laura Grunfeld, Chair
Rick Brown
Priscilla Rueger

Remote Attendance: Pam Mercer

Absent: Gail Mullen
Guests: Deena Caswell

The meeting was called to order at 1:14 PM and was chaired by Grunfeld.

This is the COD's first in-person meeting since the pandemic began in March of 2020! Due to technical difficulties, we are not able to record the meeting.

1.) Approval of June 11, 2021 minutes: By consensus, the June 11, 2021 minutes were approved.

2.) Playground Accessibility: The COD discussed two items. First, plans for a new playground at the Town Library and, second, we discussed possible changes for the existing playground at the Town Park.

First, the Commission spoke with Deena Caswell, the new Director for the library, and she agreed to pass on the COD's comments to Sig Spiegel, Vice Chair of the Friends of the Bushnell Sage Library, the person spearheading the playground project. The COD discussed how important accessibility is. Grunfeld passed on an email that Jeff Dougan of the MA Office on Disability (MOD) had written outlining what is required regarding playgrounds and accessibility. Brown mentioned that an accessible route to the playground is required. There was a question about what type of ground cover would be used. Rueger stressed how important it is to make sure the playground is accessible to everyone. The COD said to check for an accessible route, an accessible ground surface covering, and see if the play elements are accessible.

Secondly, the Chair of the Select Board, Rene Wood, had asked Grunfeld to get feedback from the COD. Wood plans to write an MOD grant application and wants to purchase an accessible trail wheelchair with part of the monies and apply for accessible play elements for the Town Park playground with the remaining \$35,000. Wood wondered if the COD would support this.

After discussion the COD members said that while accessibility at the Town Park's playground is a priority, it should not be rushed into. They felt that \$35,000 would not go very far and the COD recommended that the Town form a committee consisting of stakeholders such as children with

disabilities, their parents, and people willing to educate themselves in how to design an accessible playground so that they can determine the best design for this playground. The COD recommends that this committee be established before purchasing any more playground elements or moving forward in any way, as proper guidance is necessary to be sure of creating a truly accessible playground that all children may use. Since this is a more time-consuming process there would not be time to implement this process before the upcoming MOD grant is due. The Town may want to recruit members for the committee from the school and the library, and advertise in the Sheffield Times, as well as posting flyers around town. COD member, Pam Mercer, offered to help with setting up the Committee.

An alternative approach for the grant application would be to not only apply for the trail wheelchair but also for funds to build an accessible trail or renovate an existing trail so that it is accessible. One possibility is to improve Covered Bridge Lane all the way to Boardman Street. It was suggested that the Greenagers organization would be a good resource to involve with building an accessible trail. Library Director Caswell has agreed to add the trail wheelchair to the library's Catalog of Things and to handle checking it out.

The COD, as a group, believes that the Town should not only comply with the law but work towards true accessibility for every person. This often means going above the bare minimum that the law requires. True inclusion and accessibility should be the goals.

The COD is grateful to Wood for her continued support of accessibility for the citizens of Sheffield.

- 3.) **ADA Self-Evaluation Priorities Document:** Discussion postponed until the next meeting.
- 4.) **COD Picnic Planning:** Discussion postponed until the next meeting.
- 5.) **Sheffield Fair Participation:** Discussion postponed until the next meeting.
- 6.) **Members' Items:** There were none.
- 7.) **Visitors' Items:** There were none.
- 8.) **Items for next meeting's agenda:** Updates on the following items: ADA Self-Evaluation Priorities, Sheffield Times articles, Library emergency evacuation training, COD Picnic, Sheffield Fair participation, Town and Library Playgrounds, Town Accessibility Handbook, need for a clerk.
- 9.) **Action Items:**
 - a. Grunfeld: Send priorities list and COD recommendations regarding MOD grant to Wood.
- 10.) **Date, time, place for next meeting:** Wednesday, July 16, 10:30 AM. This will be an in-person meeting.
- 11.) **Communications:** None
- 12.) **Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 2:44 PM.

Respectfully submitted:



Laura Grunfeld
Chair, Commission on Disabilities