



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



Friday, October 19, 2018
Town Hall, Downstairs Meeting Room
Meeting officially opened at 10:30 AM

Commission Members

Present: Laura Grunfeld, Chair
Priscilla Rueger
Rick Brown
Gail Mullen
Absent: Dale Alden
Guests: Rhonda LaBombard

Grunfeld called the Commission on Disabilities (COD) meeting officially open at 10:30 AM. The agenda was rearranged slightly to have more time with Town Administrator, Rhonda LaBombard, whose time was limited.

1.) Meeting with LaBombard: Various topics were covered.

- a. Accessible Parking: The new accessible Town Hall parking on the south side of the building does not work well as bushes and signage make it difficult to exit the vehicle on the driver's side. Possible work-arounds were discussed including driving in the other way or parking farther to the right. Rueger mentioned that it would have been helpful if the architects had consulted with people with disabilities. The COD will consider solutions and make a recommendation to the Select Board.
- b. Other improvements at Town Hall: Larger exit signs installed, braille added to signage, automatic doors installed, legs added to the upstairs mailbox and to the counter downstairs.
- c. Town Park Playground: The COD is concerned about the limited number of accessible play elements. LaBombard says that the Town has applied to the Mass. Office on Disability for more accessible playground equipment and also that Town funds would be set aside each year to add more accessible elements over time. LaBombard pointed out that the two accessible elements that are there now are better than what we had before and that the Town is trying to make it possible for more people to enjoy the playground.
- d. Emergency evacuation sled training: LaBombard said that she had not been able to find a training that applied to our situation as the sleds are typically used in a hospital setting where someone is rolled out of a bed rather than getting on the sled from a wheelchair.
- e. Complete Streets: Grunfeld explained that the COD was in the process of putting together a report for the Complete Streets application. She asked if there is a timeline for putting together the grant and what the COD's deadline would be. LaBombard said that they are not anywhere near ready and they do not have a timeline although they may be looking at it in the coming spring or early summer. It is a complex grant application and the Town may be working with an engineer from Boston to help put it together. Brown mentioned that he had a long-term connection with the Conway School and that graduate students there could assist with the Complete Streets application for a much-reduced rate. They

have quite a bit of experience with Complete Streets applications and have integrated Complete Streets into their school work. Brown offered to continue discussions with Conway. LaBombard agreed that it would be good to see what they have to offer. He said that the earliest students could assist would be November 2019.

- f. Other grants: LaBombard said that the Town is planning to apply for a CDBG grant in January that would fund accessibility upgrades to the Police Station.

The COD thanked LaBombard for her time and she left for another meeting.

By consensus the COD expressed support for Brown to move ahead with discussions with Conway and to ask about what happens with the process from beginning to end. The COD also said that Brown should feel free to talk with LaBombard about what he learns without having to wait for a COD meeting. Brown said he would keep us informed. Grunfeld pointed out that in order to get on their docket for next November we might need to speak with them soon.

2.) Approval of September 21, 2018 Minutes: *By consensus, the September 21, 2018 minutes were approved.*

3.) New Member Introduction: The person had decided not to join the commission and was not present.

4.) COD Documents Update Plan (ADA Self-Evaluation, Transportation, Visitability, Etc): Grunfeld informed the group about the brochure rack that the COD had purchased with the intent to display it at Town Hall or the Library and to fill it with information about services available to people with disabilities. It would include the documents that the COD has produced as well as brochures from other agencies and organizations. The COD agreed to begin working on updating the ADA Self-Evaluation at upcoming meetings as the first priority.

5.) Sheffield Times: As the Sheffield Times submission deadline was extended through the coming weekend, the group discussed topics for a possible article and agreed to let Grunfeld determine the topic and write the article. Possible topics:

- a. Small business accessibility.
- b. Customer service for people with disabilities.
- c. The ADA Self-Evaluation. (The group agreed to wait until it is updated.)
- d. Reprint from the Mass Office on Disability newsletter.
- e. Promote the services that are available from various organizations.
- f. Accessible parks and trails in Sheffield (Alden).
- g. Service animals.

6.) Complete Streets Site Visit: The site visit was postponed to the next meeting. We agreed to have a separate meeting on Nov 2, if all members are available. For the purposes of his conversation with the Conway School, Brown wanted to know what was considered “downtown” Sheffield. We discussed defining “downtown” as from the bridge on the north side of town, to the Police Station. However, we have also been interested in sidewalks that extend from the Senior Center to Mount Everett School.

7.) Members’ Items:

- a. Emergency medical form and the Sheffield Fair to be discussed at a future meeting.
- b. Rueger reported that the AARP provides technical support but not funding.
- c. The group agreed to meet at the library for the coming meetings.

- d. Rick attended the MOD Summit on October 5, in Summerville MA. It was a very accessible meeting location. The head of the MOD described what work they do, that there were 90 applications for the MOD grants, and emergency preparedness. There was a series of speakers:
 - i. The head of Spaulding Rehab gave a talk about the history of rehabilitation care.
 - ii. A speaker from UNH talked about disability employment data. The gap between the employment of people with disabilities (37.7%) versus people without disabilities (77.2%) in Massachusetts, is about 39.5%. Nationally it is 40.2%
 - iii. The New England ADA Center talked about Addiction and recovery and how it is covered under the ADA.
 - iv. A professor from Boston College reported on her research into the mental health of first responders who she says have higher suicide rates.
 - v. There was a panel discussion of Massachusetts Agencies that serve people with disabilities. One person said that there is a shortage of sign language interpreters and the need for interpreters is expected to increase 18% per year for the foreseeable future.

8.) Items for next meeting's agenda: November 2 (tentative): site visit for the Complete Streets proposal. November 16: suggestions for accessible parking at Town Hall, update the ADA Self-Evaluation, Sheffield Times article, Conway School update, emergency medical form, Sheffield Fair.

9.) Date, time, place for next meeting: Tentative, Friday, November 2 (depending on other member's availability) for Sheffield site visit – start at Town Hall parking lot. Friday, November 16, 10:30AM, at Bushnell Sage Library.

10.) Communications: There were none.

11.) Adjournment: *Rueger moved to close the meeting. Brown seconded the motion.* The meeting was adjourned at about 12:06PM.

Respectfully submitted:



Laura Grunfeld
Chair, Commission on Disabilities