

**Commission for Accessibility  
Meeting Minutes  
Monday, December 09, 2024**

**2024 Commission for Accessibility  
Year in Review**

Meeting Via Zoom

In Attendance: Michael Londrigan, Christine Santori, Tony Phillips, Don Ciota

**Call to Order:** 5:00 PM

**MOTION:** To approve CfA minutes from November 18 Meeting.  
Motion by Michael, Second by Christine,  
APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

**CfA: 2024 Topical Year in Review**

**January:**

**Public Comment and Follow up on Private Parking Issue:**

This section of our meeting was opened by our visitors, who voiced concerns over handicapped parking spots in town. The discussion was twofold, first about compliance, and second about adequacy of spaces.

**The U.S. Access Board**

The U.S. Access Board is an independent federal agency that promotes equality for people with disabilities. Created in 1973 to ensure access to federally funded facilities, the Access Board is a leading source of information and accessibility design.

## **February:**

### **Discussion on Implementation and progress on the ADA Transition Plan developed from the town-wide self-assessment.**

**Guest Speaker: Jake Muller, Director of Purchasing and Facilities,  
Town of Ridgefield**

Jake Muller is a twenty-year career employee with the Town of Ridgefield. His responsibilities include oversight of the town's transition plan, which was compiled in accordance with the ADA town-wide self-assessment. The Americans with Disabilities Act mandates all local governments to perform a self-assessment of all town-owned properties and programs in order to insure compliance with the Act, requiring creation of a transition plan to list deficiencies as a planning tool for remediation.

### **Discussion of CfA participation in RPS Transition Fair March 6, 2024**

The Commission has been invited by Jessica DiValentino, Transition Coordinator/Ridgefield Transition Program, to participate in the first Transition Planning Fair sponsored by the Ridgefield Public Schools to be held on Wednesday, March 6 in the high school cafeteria from 6-8PM.

## **March:**

### **Follow up on ADA Private Parking Issue.**

Michael gave the Commission an update on a private (business) parking issue in town. The Americans with Disabilities Act mandates standards for public access entities (Title III).

### **Update on School Transition Fair.**

This was an opportunity for the Commission to support a valuable school program aimed at enhancing the education and life-skills of students with disabilities.

# Freedom of Information Act

A public meeting is any hearing or other proceeding of a public agency, or gathering of, or communication by or to a quorum of a multi-member agency, to discuss or act on any matter over which it has authority.

**April:**

## Connecticut Sources of Disability Resources

**The following is a compendium of services offered by the CT Department of Aging and Disability Services, the CT Department of Social Services, and other CT agencies.**

### CT Disability Services:

- [Aging and Disability Resources Center](#)
- [Autism Spectrum Disorder - ASD](#)
- [Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders \(CHCPE\)](#)
- [Connecticut Tech Act](#)
- [Contact DDS](#)
- [Council on Developmental Disabilities](#)
- [CT AHEAD: Association on Higher Education and Disability](#)
- [Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services](#)
- [Department of Developmental Services \(DDS\) Provider List](#)
- [Department of Developmental Services Providers](#)
- [Developmental Services Forms](#)
- [Developmental Services Video Library](#)
- [Developmental Support Services](#)
- [Disability Services](#)
- [Driver Training Program for Persons with Disabilities](#)
- [Durable Medical Equipment](#)
- [Independent Living Services](#)
- [Judicial Branch ADA Information](#)

- [Library Services for Persons with Disabilities](#)
  - [Living Services](#)
  - [Living the Mission](#)
  - [Long-Term Services and Supports - LTSS](#)
  - [Med-Connect \(Medicaid for Employees with Disabilities\)](#)
  - [Medicaid State Plan Amendments](#)
  - [Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities](#)
  - [Services for the Blind](#)
  - [Support and Services Topics A-Z](#)
  - [Veteran's Home and Community Based Services](#)
  - [Vocational Rehabilitation Services](#)
  - [Vocational Rehabilitation Services for the Blind](#)
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- [Workers' Rehabilitation Services](#)

**May:**

**Multiple Chemical Sensitivity, an introduction, international awareness recognition under U.S. Law in a multi-jurisdictional context.**

Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS) is an acquired multifactorial syndrome characterized by a recurrent set of debilitating symptoms. The symptoms of this controversial disorder are reported to be induced by environmental chemicals at doses far below those usually harmful to most persons. They involve a large spectrum of organ systems and typically disappear when the environmental chemicals are removed. The underlying causes of the syndrome, whether biological or psychologic, are not fully understood.

## **June:**

### **Public Comment.**

Michael has received a response from the management of 80 Grove Street regarding his inquiry regarding the lack of a handicapped designated parking space at this facility.

Tony spoke to the manager of Marshall's at Copps Plaza Shopping Center about replacing benches at the bus stop located there.

Michael asked about the status of the Prospector Theater parking space complaint. A discussion followed concerning town transportation for persons with disabilities and the aging. Mentioned were the town bus, Sweet HART Bus, Rides for Ridgefield, the HART bus to Metro North, and the 7-Link bus. Christine mentioned transportation services provided by Ability Beyond Disability as an example of the private sector participating in this essential need.

## **September:**

### **Public Comment**

After initially receiving positive feedback from the landlord at 80 Grove Street, no further response has been received regarding the lack of a handicapped parking space at this address.

Christine brought up the erroneous response she has heard from Title III entities that have claimed a "grandfather clause" exemption from ADA compliance. There is no such exemption. We discussed concepts contained in Title III as "readily achievable,." **How to engage ADA**

The Americans with Disabilities Act and other related disability-related laws are deemed *Compliance-Based Laws* and require a complaint to be

invoked before enforcement action can be commenced. This Commission considers its position as an informational resource for the town, its residents and its businesses.

Below is the edited version of the ADA sample letter for those who may wish to contact a Title III entity with a concern about lack of accessibility under ADA.

**[Your Name]**

[Your Address]

*listed,*

[City, State, ZIP].

[Email Address]

[Phone Number]

*hint: Although your an address should be*

*you can, for example, delete your Email or*  
*phone number.*

**[Date]**

**[Business Owner/Manager Name/ Landlord]**

[Business Name]

[Business Address]

[City, State, ZIP Code]

Dear [Business Owner/Manager Name/Landlord],

I am writing to formally address a concern regarding a lack of accessibility at [*specific location of the facility*] that has affected my ability, as a person with a disability, to fully participate in [*describe the everyday activity, e.g., dining, shopping, or attending an event*] at your establishment. While I understand the complexities involved in managing a business, I want to emphasize that accessibility is a fundamental right protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

During my recent visit on [date], I encountered [describe the specific barriers, e.g., the absence of a ramp, inaccessible restrooms, lack of accessible seating, etc.]. As a result, {Describe *your feelings about being unable to access the site or to participate in an event...*} For example: I was unable to fully enjoy the services offered, which left me feeling excluded and unable to engage in what should have been a routine, everyday activity.

I trust that this was not your intention, but I must emphasize that the lack of appropriate accommodations poses a significant barrier to individuals with disabilities. The ADA requires public accommodations to ensure equal access for everyone, and noncompliance not only affects individuals like myself but also risks further exclusion of a substantial portion of the community.

I respectfully request that you address this issue as soon as possible to ensure your establishment meets ADA standards. By making the necessary changes, you not only comply with the law but also demonstrate a commitment to inclusivity and respect for all members of the community.

Please inform me of the steps you plan to take to resolve this matter. I would be happy to discuss any specific details that might help guide you in addressing this issue. I appreciate your attention to this concern and hope to see the necessary improvements made in the near future.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your response. {A *time frame can be added here.*}

Sincerely,  
[Your Full Name]  
[Your Contact Information]

{a cc can be added as an option}

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*This letter communicates your concerns clearly while maintaining professionalism, encouraging the business to take action while referencing their legal responsibilities the under ADA. The written text is meant as an example and can be changed to express you own thoughts or ideas.*

## **October:**

**Guest Speaker: Holly Lapine, Education and Access Specialist, The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum; and Antonio Paone.**

*Introduction: Founded by art collector and fashion designer Larry Aldrich in 1964, The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum is one of the oldest contemporary art museums in the United States. The Museum is one of the few independent non-collecting institutions in the country and the only museum in Connecticut solely dedicated to the presentation of contemporary art.*

*The Museum presents the first solo museum exhibitions by emerging artists, significant exhibitions of established and mid-career artists whose work is under recognized, thematic group exhibitions exploring topics on contemporary art and society, and newly commissioned work.*

Holly described the Museum's community outreach initiative in making the programs available to persons with disabilities, the aging, youth and others who may not be taking advantage of the resourceful offerings of this renowned facility. The use of multidisciplinary presentations allows persons with vision, hearing, and tactile disabilities to experience art as an enjoyable and healing experience. She also described physical access to their facility and grounds as being fully accessible.



Upon conclusion the Commission complemented the Museum for their fine efforts at accessibility and outreach. Such initiatives add to the mosaic of community caring and support for those who may not otherwise be able to participate in such a joyful life activity.

## **Public Comment**

Michael reports he has not received a response from the landlord at 80 Grove Street. He also mentioned the shortcomings of accessibility at the Barlow school athletic field. A letter he sent on this issue has not been answered.

Debbie asked about the advisability of personal contact with a landlord or business owner, which Tony answered by agreeing that was an excellent first step as these laws encourage community discussion.

## **Service Animals under ADA and Connecticut Law**

**This discussion will include Service Animals, Emotional Support Animals (ESAs) (otherwise referred to as therapy, comfort or companion animals), and Psychiatric Service Animals.**

Many people with disabilities use a service animal in order to fully participate in everyday life. Dogs can be trained to perform many important tasks to assist people with disabilities, such as providing stability for a person who has difficulty walking, picking up items for a person who uses a wheelchair, preventing a child with autism from wandering away, or alerting a person who has hearing loss when someone is approaching from behind.

**Monday, November 18, 2024 5:00PM**

**Meeting Dates\* for 2025:**

<b>Jan 13</b>	<b>Feb 10</b>	<b>Mar 10</b>
<b>Apr 7</b>	<b>May 12</b>	<b>June 9</b>
<b>July n/a</b>	<b>Aug n/a</b>	<b>Sept 8</b>
<b>Oct 6</b>	<b>Nov 10</b>	<b>Dec 8</b>

\*All meetings are Via Zoom on Monday of the dates above at 5:00 PM.

**Comparison of ADA Title II and Title III requirements.**

Under the ADA the requirements for accessibility compliance is stricter for Title II entities than for those of Title III. Please explain the differences.

Title II and Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) impose different requirements on entities concerning accessibility, and Title II requirements tend to be stricter.

**Adjourn** 6:10PM

Minutes by Don Ciota

