



**Commission for Accessibility
Meeting Minutes
Monday, November 10, 2025**

Meeting Via Zoom

In Attendance: Maureen Culhane, Debbie Prieger, Debra Franceschini, Divya Dorairajan, Christine Santori, Tony Phillips, Don Ciota.

5:05 PM CALL TO ORDER

N.B. There were two motions made during this session.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION 1: To approve CfA minutes from Oct 6, 2025

Motion by Debbie, Second by Debra
APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

COMMISSION BUSINESS:

**Letter Preparation to Elected Officials
Board of Selectman**

The Commission was presented with Draft letters on the above topics, which had been authorized during its previous session. Both were discussed by the members and a final draft of each will be drawn up and sent.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 Section 504

This was the first major US federal law to prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability.

“No otherwise qualified individual with a disability...shall, solely by reason of their disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

N. B. Applied civil rights principles (like those of the Civil Rights Act of 1964) to people with disabilities.

Became a foundation for later laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.

US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is responsible for enforcing federal laws that make it illegal to discriminate against a job applicant or an employee because of the person's disability (among many other issues.)

Most employers with at least 15 employees are covered by EEOC laws (20 employees in age discrimination cases). Most labor unions and employment agencies are also covered.

The laws apply to all types of work situations, including hiring, firing, promotions, harassment, training, wages, and benefits.

At this point an interruption to the meeting occurred, which was shortly thereafter eliminated by the Zoom host.

After resumption of the program a discussion occurred about whether to conclude the meeting.

MOTION 2: To conclude the meeting.

Motion by Maureen

Second by Debbie

MOTION DENIED

NAY 3, YEA 1, ABSENT 1.

Recent DOJ CONSENT DECREES in Connecticut

The following local actions by the Department of Justice were presented in order to illustrate the application of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other disability laws. The first is an example of a Title II enforcement (local governments), the second a Title III enforcement (public access). In both cases the subject parties cooperated with the DOJ in agreeing to remediate the shortcomings in accessibility and inclusion. A focus was made on the extent of the DOJ findings along with

comprehensive plans for remediation, the obvious financial burdens and the time frame for completion.

New Canaan to Make Significant Changes to Town Facilities.

Tuesday, September 10, 2024. U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Connecticut

Vanessa Roberts Avery, United States Attorney for the District of Connecticut, today announced that the U.S. Attorney's Office has reached a settlement agreement with the Town of New Canaan to resolve allegations that some of the town's facilities did not comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA").

The settlement agreement resolves a complaint filed by an individual alleging that some of New Canaan's parks and sports facilities as well as parts of the Town Hall campus were inaccessible to individuals with mobility disabilities.

Under federal law, municipalities must ensure that their programs, services, and activities are accessible to individuals with mobility disabilities. When municipalities alter or build new facilities, they must also make them accessible to persons with disabilities in accordance with the ADA Standards for Accessible Design.

New Canaan is in the process of making the significant improvements required by the settlement agreement at Waveny Park, New Canaan High School, Mead Park, and the Town Hall. Some changes required by the settlement include adding accessible seating, parking, and routes to several sports fields and athletic facilities at New Canaan High School and Mead Park, and making numerous changes to the interior and exterior of Waveny House to make it more accessible, including adding an elevator. The town will also create an accessible route from Vine Cottage to the Town Hall.

U.S. Attorney Avery commended the leadership of the Town of New Canaan for cooperating with the U.S. Attorney's Office to resolve the investigation. "Individuals with disabilities should have equal access to their local park and be able to cheer on their children at a local high school game without worrying about inaccessible facilities," said U.S. Attorney Avery. "I am pleased that New Canaan has made this commitment to making its facilities more accessible to individuals with disabilities."

Any member of the public who wishes to file a complaint alleging that a public entity or place of public accommodation in Connecticut is not accessible to persons with disabilities may contact the Civil Rights Intake Specialist at the U.S. Attorney's Office at 203-696-3000.

Additional information about the ADA can be found at www.ada.gov, or by calling the Justice Department's toll-free information line at (800) 514-0301 and (833) 610-1264 (TTY). More information about the Civil Rights Division and the laws it enforces is available at www.justice.gov/crt.

This matter was handled by Assistant U.S. Attorney Stewart C. Dearing in coordination with the Disability Rights Section of the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division.

Updated September 10, 2024

Stamford Hotel to Make Significant Changes to Comply with the ADA

Thursday, January 23, 2025

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Connecticut

Marc H. Silverman, Acting United States Attorney for the District of Connecticut, today announced that the U.S. Attorney's Office has entered into a settlement agreement with Stamford Hotel Propco, LLC and MJ Hotels of Stamford, LLC, owner and manager of Stamford Marriott Hotel & Spa ("Stamford Marriott"), located in Stamford, to resolve allegations that the hotel was not in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 ("ADA").

The settlement agreement, which resolves an ADA complaint filed by an individual with a disability alleging that the Stamford Marriott was not accessible for individuals with physical disabilities, requires the hotel to make a suite accessible for individuals with mobility disabilities, make 14 additional rooms accessible for individuals with hearing disabilities, and make numerous changes in other accessible rooms to bring them into compliance with the 2010 Standards for Accessible Design. The hotel will also add accessible dining surfaces to its lobby restaurants and make changes in the restrooms located on the lobby, lower level, and mezzanine to make them more accessible. It will also make changes to its parking garage, including by adding signs and access aisles to accessible parking spaces and adjusting several curb ramps so that they are accessible.

The Stamford Marriott is in the process of making the changes required by the settlement agreement and will continue to make improvements over the next 30 months.

Under federal law, private entities that own or operate places of "public accommodation," including hotels and inns, are prohibited from discriminating on the basis of disability. The ADA authorizes the U.S. Department of Justice to investigate complaints and undertake periodic reviews of compliance of covered entities. The

Justice Department is also authorized to commence a civil lawsuit in federal court in any case that involves a pattern or practice of discrimination or that raises issues of general public importance, and to seek injunctive relief, monetary damages, and civil penalties.

Any member of the public who wishes to file a complaint alleging that any place of public accommodation or public entity in Connecticut is not accessible to persons with disabilities may contact the U.S. Attorney's Office at 203-696-3000.

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Updated January 23, 2025

Public Comment none

Adjourn.

2025 Meeting Dates:

Dec 8

Minutes prepared by Don Ciota

2025 Meeting Dates:

Dec 8

The

Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a significant U.S. federal law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities and supports programs providing vocational rehabilitation, supported employment, and independent living services. It was the first major federal disability rights law and influenced the development of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Key Provisions (Sections of the Act)

Title V of the Act includes several important sections that address access and equal opportunity for people with disabilities:

- **Section 501:** Prevents employment discrimination within the **federal sector** and mandates federal agencies to take affirmative action to hire, place, and promote individuals with disabilities.
- **Section 502:** Created the **U.S. Access Board**, an independent federal agency tasked with developing accessibility guidelines for the built environment, transportation, and electronic and information technology.
- **Section 503:** Prohibits employment discrimination by **federal contractors and subcontractors** holding contracts over \$15,000 and requires them to take affirmative steps to recruit and promote qualified individuals with disabilities.
- **Section 504:** Prohibits discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities in programs or activities that receive **federal financial assistance** or are conducted by a federal executive agency. This applies to entities such as hospitals, schools, and transportation systems that receive federal funding.
- **Section 508:** Requires federal agencies to ensure their **electronic and information technology** is accessible to individuals with disabilities.

What is the difference between the ADA and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973?

AI Overview

The main difference is scope: the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibits disability discrimination in programs and activities receiving federal funds, while the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 expanded these protections to cover the private sector, public accommodations, and public services, not just federally funded entities. The ADA essentially built upon the foundation of the Rehabilitation Act, applying similar anti-discrimination principles to a much broader range of places and services.

PRESS RELEASE

New Canaan to Make Significant Changes to Town Facilities to Comply with the ADA

Tuesday, September 10, 2024

Share

For Immediate Release

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Topics

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Updated January 23, 2025

Letter to Elected Officials (Complimentary and Encouraging)

Open with Gratitude. Re: Subject
Acknowledge their Positive Impact
Encourage continued Leadership
Close Respectfully