



Commission for Accessibility

Meeting Minutes

October 19, 2026

N.B. This was an in-person meeting which took place at town hall in the downstairs small conference room.

5:10 PM CALL TO ORDER

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

N.B. There were no motions made during this session.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

In Memorium:

Michael Londrigan Obituary

Michael Patrick Londrigan, 72, of Ridgefield, Connecticut passed away peacefully on September 22, 2026, in his home. The son of Arthur Francis Londrigan and Margret Keenan Londrigan, Michael is survived by his loving wife of fifty years, Marie. In addition, he also leaves behind his children Paul and Leah, their spouses Jaclyn and Chris, as well as his five grandchildren: Greyson, Opal, Ever, Reilly, and Liam. Michael is also survived by his siblings, Arthur, Peggy, Billy, Jerry, and the late Kitty.

Michael was born on August 20th, 1954 in Jersey City, New Jersey. Michael graduated from Hudson Catholic High School, Saint Peter's College, and Fairleigh Dickinson University. Michael spent time in the fashion industry, but his heart found a home at LIM, The College for the Business of Fashion. A published author, Michael wrote several fashion related books. Outside of his profession, Michael was an avid runner who ran the NYC marathon as well as several triathlons. He enjoyed woodworking, stained glass, and special time with his children and grandchildren.

Having met his wife at the age of nine, Michael knew how to play the long game. His accomplishments run the gamut. Starting an ice hockey team for his son, building a skate park for his town, volunteering for coaching positions, sitting on the commission for handicap accessibility, and always making sure things were in working order for his family and friends; Michael was the farthest thing from selfish.

5:15 PM Studies that focus on the mental stresses that occur with persons with disabilities and their family members

R J Mitte Obituary

It is with profound sadness that we share the tragic passing of beloved actor, philanthropist and passionate disability rights advocate RJ Mitte, who passed away on Monday, **the 12th of October 2026**, in Brownsville, Texas, at the age of 34.

RJ Mitte was best known for his role as Walter “Flynn” White Jr. on AMC’s critically acclaimed, award-winning series Breaking Bad. Drawing from his own experience living with cerebral palsy, Mitte brought authenticity to the role and built a platform for disability awareness and inclusion. Beyond entertaining friends and family around the world, he served as an ambassador for United Cerebral Palsy and Shriners Children’s. He also served as president of The Mitte Foundation, supporting philanthropic efforts and community initiatives, while using his platform to challenge stereotypes and promote greater representation for people with disabilities.

Oregon School Shooting. October 15, 2026

The Silver Rail Elementary School shooting in Bend, Oregon, happened on Thursday and killed three children and a teacher, with additional injuries reported. The 16-year-old suspect, xxxxxx, was a former student and was killed by a bystander.

Discussion:

Extensive research confirms that families living with disabilities face a profound, interconnected mental health burden.

Studies focusing on both individuals with disabilities and their family caregivers reveal a complex ecosystem of psychological stress, anxiety, and depression.

1. Mental Stress Among Individuals with Disabilities

Research demonstrates that navigating life with a disability places a severe, compounding strain on psychological well-being.

- **Frequent Mental Distress:** A major study by the CDC on Disability and Mental Health found that adults with disabilities are **nearly 5 times more likely** to report frequent mental distress (defined as 14 or more mentally unhealthy days in a month) compared to those without disabilities. [[1](#)]
 - **Social Isolation and Distress:** Research published in *Current Psychology* indicates that many individuals with disabilities deal with "social avoidance and distress". Driven by feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and a perceived fear of negative evaluation by others, many self-isolate, which further exacerbates depressive symptoms and marginalization. [[1](#), [2](#)]
 - **The Weight of Chronic Conditions:** Clinical research, such as network analyses published in *Diabetes Care*, underscores how specific daily challenges (e.g., rigid treatment regimens, fear of physical injury, or loss of independence) directly trigger a cascade of generalized anxiety and feelings of failure. [[1](#), [2](#)]
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2. Psychological Impact on Family Members & Caregivers

Caregiving stress is often defined as an overwhelming psychological imbalance where the daily demands of care outpace actual coping capacities. [1]

- **Elevated Stress and Burnout:** According to data highlighted by organizations like the [American Psychological Association \(APA\)](#), family caregivers experience exceptionally high rates of anxiety, depression, and physical exhaustion. A 2026 study notes that parents of children with disabilities are **twice as likely** to suffer from high psychological stress and burnout due to the demands of constant supervision. [1, 2]
- **Intergenerational Depression Risks:** A study published in *PMC* evaluated depression risks among family caregivers, finding that **35.5% of parents and 32.4% of grandparents** caring for children with disabilities exhibited high depressive risks. Mothers and grandmothers were found to bear the heaviest psychological burden. [1]
- **Behavioral vs. Physical Strain:** Literature tracking intellectual and developmental disabilities suggests that the *nature* of the stress varies. Interestingly, providing physical care is often less mentally taxing for family members than managing severe communication barriers or behavioral problems, which act as primary predictors of caregiver breakdown. [1]

3. Long-Term and Cyclical Family Dynamics

The mental health impact of a disability ripples across the entire family structure and persists across generations.

Group Affected	Core Findings & Psychosocial Adversities	Key Correlates / Stress Drivers
Parents	50% more likely to find parenting frustrating; higher rates of marital strain and financial burden.	Linked to child's sleep problems and lack of neighborhood

		barrier-free infrastructure.
Siblings	Higher likelihood of experiencing loneliness, low subjective well-being, and resentment into adulthood.	Often forced to take on early emotional or secondary caregiving roles.
Grandparents	Significant depressive risks, highly impacted by the child's emotional stability.	Correlated closely with the child's frequency of mood swings.

Mitigating Factors and Conclusion

Across these studies, researchers emphasize that **subjective social support** (feeling cared for) and **objective support** (such as respite care, financial aid, and barrier-free environments) are paramount. When families have access to strong social networks, cohesive family relationships, and streamlined healthcare coordination, the negative impacts of parenting and caregiving stress are drastically reduced.

NONE.

6:15 PM ADJOURN

Prepared by Don Ciota, Chairman
Commission for Accessibility
Town of Ridgefield
October 19, 2026

2026 Meeting Dates:

Nov 9

Dec 7

