

**Commission for Accessibility
Meeting Minutes
June 28, 2021**

Via Zoom

Kate White, Tony Phillips, Maureen Culhane, Dave Choplinski, Don Ciota

Call to Order: 5:07 PM

During the Public Comment session, the Commission welcomed Michelle Lange Rapp as a guest, who has expressed an interest in the workings of this group. She related her experiences of the difficulties of accessibility in the town through the eyes of persons with mobility challenges.

Christine and Maureen related their time in participating in a town-wide-sidewalk event in June. Christine has developed an app, which can be accessed through her business website, Personal Touch. The app focuses on accessibility issues. An objective of the Commission will be to have this app available on the town website. Maureen felt the exposure to the public of resources available to persons with disabilities was appreciated by the public.

Dave spoke on the subject of accessibility to the town Parks and Rec facility. Maureen and Kate commented about the lack of sidewalks and the dangers of pedestrians crossing Route 35, especially from the development across the way. Tony referred to a plan to connect the rail trail to Route 35, but there doesn't seem to be a timeline or definitive plan at this time. This is a concern the Commission must be sure to pass along before the transition plan is concluded and distributed to the stakeholders. Tony mentioned since Route 35 is a state highway, other jurisdictional issues may arise.

The town wide self-assessment study being conducted by the Institute for Human Centered Design (IHCD) has been in progress at various stages for over four years. When this project was proposed the Commission for Accessibility (then called the Commission for the Disabled) advocated for the schools to be included in the study. Our reasoning was that due to

yearly budgetary pressures, the schools might not be able to find the funds to contribute to their share of the project. The Board of Selectman under First Selectman Rudy Marconi chose to include the schools in the study at town expense.

This evening, Tony provided updated information regarding the schools' participation in this process. Under the current administration led by Dr. Susie Da Silva, Superintendent of Schools, a refreshing level of interest and cooperation has been established.

Dr. Da Silva has consulted with Tony about the availability of ADA-related training for Dr. Elizabeth Hannaway, Assistant Superintendent of Special Services. Dr. Hannaway's participation will add a background of educational and legislative understanding to the concept of implementing the actions required by the Americans with Disabilities Act, a civil rights law, which mandates accessibility. Teamed with Joseph Morits, Director of Facilities, the Commission has every confidence the schools will be moving forward to address the issues of compliance as set forth in the upcoming transition plan.

Tony forwarded the latest submissions about town fields from David West of IHCD, which have been shared with the Commission members. When asked what remains to be done, Tony listed several items: Open Spaces, the Town website, prioritization of work from the transition list, a roll out and narrative of the project from IHCD.

Kate asked when this project would be ready for presentation to the public. It is our objective to commence this project with a presentation to all the stakeholders (individuals responsible for the facilities and programs covered by the study and transition list). We feel this should be done when all the parts of the study have been completed. It is Tony's suggestion the Commission be available to discuss this plan as the final parts of the study arrive. We will need to suggest ways to coordinate such a presentation with the Board of Selectman, the Schools, IHCD and all Town Stakeholders.

The latest information David of IHCD has given Tony is for completion by the end of July.

Meeting Adjourned: 5:50PM

Minutes prepared by Don Ciota, Chairman
Commission for Accessibility