

**Commission for Accessibility
Meeting Minutes
Monday, February 12, 2024**

Meeting Via Zoom

In Attendance: Michael Londrigan, Dave Choplinski, Tony Phillips, Don Ciota

Guests: Jake Muller

Call to Order: 5:04 PM

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.

The Board of Selectman originally authorized the self-assessment and included funding for the schools. The survey was conducted by the Institute of Human-Centered Design, which also created the transition plan.

It is from this plan projects are selected for remediation. The objective as Jake pointed out is to make town and school facilities and programs accessible according to the specifications as set by the ADA. Although most of these specifications relate to building plans, it is not a building code. The ADA is a civil rights Act enforced by the Department of Justice.

Jake detailed many of the specific projects completed over the years, and described upcoming ones (Please see attachment). The scope of such work covers a wide range of effort and complexity from minor issues that may be resolved by routine

maintenance, to large construction projects designed with accessibility compliance. Projects are selected on the basis of immediate need and provision for the widest possible usage by persons with disabilities. The public may suggest or call to the town's attention items that should receive priority in the selection process. This can be done by notifying the Town ADA Coordinator, Tony Phillips. The Commission for Accessibility is also a source for information and advocacy.

Each year the Town includes a line in the budget for ADA compliance. This year First Selectman Rudy Marconi, after meeting with Tony Phillips, Jake Muller, and Don Ciota, decided to increase this line to \$82,500.00. Jake included the perspective that when including capital projects, the Town routinely invests more than that sum for compliance.

The Commission noted for the record the support and cooperation of the Board of Selectman for this essential program. We also recognize the awareness, concern and diligence of Jake Muller in implementing this program, and also thank Charley Fisher, Town Engineer (ret.), Jake's predecessor, for his past efforts and continuing input.

Public Comment.

Commissioner Michael Londrigan informed the Commission about a complaint made to the Department of Justice regarding lack of ADA compliant handicapped parking at a local restaurant. This is an example of ADA Title III compliance, Public Access, which applies to private businesses open to the public. The DOJ has responded and plans to follow up on this issue.

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. Transition planning has its origins in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which mandates this program and has as its objective to provide, on an individualized basis, for each student to achieve the highest level of self-reliance as they enter adult life.

Adjourn: 5:50PM

Minutes prepared by Don Ciota, Chairman

Meeting Dates for 2024:

March 11

April 8

July (none)

October 7

May 6

August (none)

November 18

June 10

September 9

December

Town of Ridgefield
Office of the Facilities Director
Listing of Recent ADA Compliant Upgrades

Date	Site	Project Description
	Ridgefield Golf Course	Purchase of an ADA compliant golf cart
Sep-17	Town Hall	Installation of new ADA compliant chair lift to Selectperson's Suite
Sep-17	Town Hall	Installation of new ADA compliant women's bathroom
Dec-17	Town Hall	Installation of 3 ADA drinking fountains
Jul-18	Ridgefield High School	New courtyard sidewalks with ADA compliant ramps
August-19	Branchville Elementary School	Renovated the k-2 playground, replaced with a new ADA compliant playground, new sidewalks within playground fencing
Sep-19	Town Hall	Front entry replacement, new ADA accessible ramp, new ADA compliant patio
Sep-19	American Legion	New ADA compliant ramp
Jan-20	Town Hall	New ADA compliant public counter, Town Clerk's Office
Sep-20	Venus Building	BOE front entry rehab, new ADA accessible ramp
Oct-20	Venus Building	New ADA compliant parking spaces added to the BOE main entrance parking area
Nov-20	SLB property, ACT Building	New ADA compliant entry & patio to the building, ADA push button controls
Nov-20	SLB property, ACT Building	New ADA compliant parking spaces added
Apr-21	Parks & Recreation Center	ADA accessible ramp re-location, closer to the main entrance
Jun-21	American Legion	New ADA compliant Bathroom
Jul-21	Ridgebury Elementary School	Renovated the k-2 playground, replaced with a new ADA compliant playground
Aug-21	Venus Building	BOE - New LULA lift (3-stop LULA)
Aug-21	Venus Building	Renovations to approximately 25,000 sq. ft. which included 7 new ADA compliant bathrooms
Sep-21	Guild of Artists Building	New ADA compliant entry & patio to the building
Oct-21	Ridgefield High School	Tiger Hollow - paved new ADA parking spaces with required signage
Jan-22	Town Wide	IHCD Study, Town Wide Study of ADA upgrades throughout Town and RPS facilities
May-22	Farmingville Elementary School	Installation of new ADA compliant pathway from playgrounds to fields
May-22	Farmingville Elementary School	New front entry sidewalks with ADA compliant ramps
May-22	Little Red School House	Installation of new ADA compliant pathway to an ADA compliant Porta John
Jul-22	Ridgefield High School	New Front entry (main entrance) sidewalks with ADA compliant ramps
Jul-22	East Ridge Middle School	Front entry rehab, new ADA handrails
Aug-22	Barlow Mountain Elementary School	Installation of new ADA compliant pathway from playgrounds to fields
Oct-22	Venus Building	Playhouse - New LULA lift (2-stop LULA)
Jan-23	Town Hall Annex	New ADA compliant lever door knobs
Apr-23	Town Hall	New ADA compliant public counter, Tax Assessor's Office
May-23	Ligi Way	New compliant combined use pathway along Ligi's Way
Jun-23	Town Hall	New ADA compliant lever door knobs
Jun-23	Branchville Road	New sidewalks with a pedestrian bridge, ADA compliant access along the Branchville business district
Aug-23	Branchville Elementary School	Renovated the G3-5 playground, replaced with a new ADA compliant playground
Sep-23	Theater Barn	New LULA lift (2-stop LULA)
Oct-23	Governor Park @ Venus Building	New basketball, tennis and pickleball courts with ADA compliant sidewalk access
Annual	Various Locations	Ongoing maintenance of sidewalks, grinding down or replacing heaved areas as necessary
Annual	Various Locations	Ongoing maintenance of ADA ramps, including patch/repairs to ramp and railing systems
Annual	Town Hall, Town Hall Annex	Ongoing evaluation of door operation open & closing pressures
Scheduled Projects 2024		
Jan-24	Town Hall Annex	New public counter (Land-Use, 2nd floor) installation, includes ADA counter height, scheduled 1/13/24
Jan-24	Ridgefield Golf Course	Complete bathroom renovations including ADA upgrades, start date 1/8/24
Jun-24	Barlow Mountain Elementary School	Proposed playground installations, grades K-5, funded and materials ordered, start date EOSY June 2024
Jun-24	Ridgebury Elementary School	Proposed playground installations, grades 3-5, funded and materials ordered, start date EOSY June 2024
Jul-24	Governor Park @ Venus Building	Proposed handicap ramp installation; funded, designed and schedule for summer of 2024 installation

February 6, 2024

Commission for Accessibility

Dave Choplinski

Maureen Culhane

Michael Londrigan

Tony Philips, ex officio
Christine Santori
Kate White

Re: Transition Planning Fair, March 6, 2024

Dear Commissioners,

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. This program has as its objective the goal of maximizing and developing the abilities of students with disabilities as they make the transition from school to adult life.

Transition planning has its origins in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which mandates this program. It begins when a child turns 14, or earlier if deemed appropriate. Simply stated, it has as its objective to provide on an individualized basis for each student to achieve the highest level of self-reliance as they enter adult life.

The Fair is intended as an introduction and review of transition services offered under this program by the Ridgefield Schools, and is aimed at families of students who are, or will be in this program. (A further description can be found in the attachment.) Also attending will be various service providers and vendors who may be associated with providing resources or services.

I invite each of you to attend this event, which will be held in the cafeteria of the high school on this date from 6:00 – 8:00 PM. We do not have a specific roll to be performed other than an opportunity for public outreach as a commission. It can also inform the public of the commission's role as a source of information for inclusion. We can also learn from the fair's participants as to the type of services available for these students.

It would be possible for the March meeting, scheduled for March 11. to be re-scheduled to coincide with this function. If we could start our official meeting

could start at 5:30 and conclude by 6:00PM. And, it does not appear necessary for our members to necessarily to stay until the fair's conclusion.

Please consider this option and let me know your thoughts. We can make decision at our upcoming meeting this coming Monday, February 12.

Thank you for our continued interest in these vital subjects.

Sincerely,

Don

Don Ciota, Chairman
Commission for Accessibility
Town of Ridgefield

Cc:Jessica DiValentino



Commission for Accessibility

INTRODUCTION to TRANSITION PLANNING

This paper has been prepared by the Commission for Accessibility (CfA) as an introduction to the Transition Plan, an important resource which aims to maximize the individualized educational and social plans for your student. The Commission encourages you to take a part in the planning of this worthy endeavor knowing you and your child will be working with a dedicated and professional Ridgefield Schools staff, who share your interests in optimizing this experience.

The CfA is an advisory body to the Ridgefield Board of Selectman. The Commission advocates for accessibility and inclusion for all persons with disabilities, and seeks to educate the community to the rights and responsibilities memorializing such rights in civil rights and other legislation. The CfA applauds both families and school staff for the dedication, concern, and love that goes into a many years-long process that seeks to help the student develop and achieve all of which they are capable.

This introduction to *Transition Planning* was prepared for parents and family members of students with disabilities by the Town of Ridgefield Commission for Accessibility (CfA). Families new to this Transition Plan program may question what the future may hold for their child as graduation day approaches. As a child progresses through the school system it is natural to contemplate what comes next. Rest assured there are powerfully laid plans to continue the progress of preparing your child for that day.



INTRODUCTION to TRANSITION PLANNING

All the information contained herein comes from Connecticut sources. The descriptions of the programs listed are based upon what is listed by the Connecticut State Department of Education. The specifics on how all this is made a part of your child's individual program can be explained by staff.

You will read about federal laws such as the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) that mandate these programs. This and other legislation addressing the needs of the disabled are civil rights laws passed by Congress and thought of by this Commission as being laws of decency and acceptance, which reflect positively on our society.

There are many online listings of resources for these topics that go into additional detail. The Ridgefield school staff professionals are an invaluable source in guiding new families through this system.

The CfA can be contacted through the office of the Town ADA Coordinator, Tony Philips. We welcome the opportunity to be of your assistance.

Commission for Accessibility

Don Ciota, Chairman
Commission for Accessibility

Christine Santori, Commissioner
Commission for Accessibility

Connecticut Transition Task Force

Dear Parents and Family Members,

One of our most important and precious roles is to raise our children to become responsible adults. We all have many questions about their future regarding self-advocacy, employment, college, training, independent living, and community participation. We want the transition from high school to young adult life to go well. We need to plan early.

The following pages contain information that will help you play a meaningful role in guiding your child for the future. Under the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA 2004), transition planning is required as part of your child's

IEP (Individualized Education Program). Transition planning begins when a child turns 14* or earlier, if determined appropriate by the Planning and Placement Team (PPT). Be proactive to insure goals for self- advocacy, college, training, employment, and/or independent living are included in the IEP.

You are a key player in your child's transition planning. We urge you to actively participate in these PPT meetings during the high school years. You bring a wealth of information about your child's abilities at home that only you can share. It is very important that you communicate with teachers anything that you feel may be essential to your child's future.

Please read this handbook thoughtfully and encourage your teenager to do the same. With your commitment, guidance, and support, your child will be given the educational foundation and tools needed to confidently transition into the adult world. As a parent, promoting self-advocacy and empowering your child to speak up is critical for the road ahead.

Sincerely,

Parent Dissemination and Training Subcommittee, Connecticut Transition Task Force

Connecticut State Department of Education

This document outlines the Connecticut State Department of Education's guidelines and requirements for secondary transition planning for students with disabilities. Here are the key points:

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Eligibility:

- Students remain eligible for special education services under IDEA until the end of the school year they turn 22 or until they graduate with a regular diploma, whichever comes first.

Transition Services Requirements:

- Transition services are required from the first Individualized Education Program (IEP) when the child turns 14, or earlier if deemed appropriate by the planning and placement team (PPT).
- IEP should include measurable postsecondary goals and transition services tailored to the child's needs, covering education, employment, and independent living.

Planning and Placement Team (PPT) Membership for Secondary Transition Services:

- PPT meetings discussing postsecondary goals and transition services should invite the student with a disability and, with parental consent, a representative from agencies providing transition services.

Student Success Plan (SSP) Implementation:

- SSP is created annually for each student from grade six, focusing on academic and career choices.
- Goals include fostering mentor/advisor interactions, monitoring progress, developing 21st-century skills, and engaging students in academic, career, and social/emotional activities.

Individualized Education Program (IEP):

- IEP includes present academic and functional levels, measurable annual goals, progress measurement, special education and related services, and accommodations.
- Secondary Transition requirements include appropriate measurable postsecondary goals and transition services.

Summary of Performance (SOP):

- A public agency must provide a summary of a student's academic achievement and functional performance, including recommendations for meeting postsecondary goals.

Addressing Gaps and Purpose of SOP:

- Students address skill gaps through instruction, work experiences, and accommodations.
- SOP aims to improve post-high school outcomes, document disabilities, assess the current impact of disabilities, justify accommodations, and enhance self-advocacy skills.

Developing the SSP:

- Involves various personnel, including special education, school nurses, counselors, and related services personnel.
- Encourages active involvement of students in writing the SOP, enhancing self-determination, and using the SOP as a lifelong learning process.

Implementation and Collaboration:

- Encourages collaboration between different plans (SSP, IEP, SOP) and emphasizes the role of adult mentor/advisors in making appropriate referrals.

This comprehensive approach aims to ensure that students with disabilities receive the necessary support to transition successfully from school to post-school activities, including education, employment, and independent living.