

Sudbury Commission on Disability

Date: February 25, 2019
Time: 10:00 AM
Location: Flynn Building (Silva Room), 278 Old Sudbury Road, Sudbury
Members Present: Kay Bell, Pat Guthy, Susan Iuliano, Lisa Kouchakdjian
Members Absent:
Others: Sue Rushfirth, Douglas Frey, Janie Dretler (Board of Selectmen liaison to the COD), Lotte Diomede (SMILE Mass), and Susan Brown (SMILE Mass)

Convene

The meeting came to order at 10:01 AM.

A quorum of the COD (at least a majority of 3) was present.

Susan Iuliano volunteered to record minutes of the Commission meeting.

Discussion

Membership Applications

The Commission welcomed Doug Frey and Sue Rushfirth, who have each submitted applications to be appointed to the COD. The members described the Commission's recent history, current goals/endeavors, and roles. Each member introduced herself and described her interests and involvement with the Commission.

Commission members explained that the COD had been dormant in recent years. The Selectmen and others were concerned about the absence of a designated group to bring an informed perspective and advocate for persons with disabilities in our town government, although the Council on Aging has often filled this gap. Kay Bell and Pat Guthy stepped up and started researching the work of the Commission, meeting with Town officials, and recruiting other members. The state enabling legislation calls for five to nine members; the Commission currently has four members.

Ongoing COD efforts and outreach were reviewed, including the following:

- KB has updated and improved the COD webpage, significantly raising the Commission's visibility.
- PG has been appointed to represent the COD on the Town's Master Plan Steering Committee.
- SI has been appointed to represent the COD on the Town's Transportation Committee.
- The COD is concerned about Town facilities and seeks to initiate an ADA Self-Evaluation; Town officials recently sought input from the COD on the Town Hall project.
- KB is the liaison to the SPS special education parent advisory committee (SEPAC); PG is liaison to the analogous committee at LS.

- LK is a member of the SPS School Committee, bringing knowledge and interest not only in special education but in supporting all persons with disabilities.

DF described his personal experience and involvement with a peer support group for persons with spinal injuries. Through this work, he learned about Commissions on Disabilities in other towns and became interested in Sudbury's efforts.

SR described her professional background as a physical therapist, including work with persons with multiple disabilities, in home care, rehabilitation, and other clinical settings.

VOTE: Upon a motion by Susan Iuliano, seconded by Lisa Kouchakdjian, the Commission unanimously agreed to support the appointments of Doug Frey and Sue Rushfirth to the Commission and designated Pat Guthy to submit a letter to the Board of Selectmen on behalf of the Commission requesting that these appointments be placed on a BOS agenda in the near future.

Approval of Minutes

- January 14, 2019: It was noted that these had been approved and SI recently sent the final version to KB for posting on the website.
- December 3, 2018: It was agreed that minutes were not required for the COD members' attendance at the Permanent Building Committee meeting.
- November 26, 2018: SI needs to send the final version to KB for posting on the website.
- October 19, 2018: SI needs to follow up with Sheila Cusolito to ensure that the information concerning the Sudbury Housing Authority is correct.

VOTE: Upon a motion by Susan Iuliano, seconded by Lisa Kouchakdjian, the minutes of the January 28, 2019, meeting were approved with revisions discussed.

Review of the Town Manager's Memo on the Open Meeting Law

Town Manager Melissa Rodrigues requested clarification from Town Counsel regarding questions about email use raised by many town boards and committees. The Commission reviewed her memo and acknowledged its understanding that email communications may count as "deliberations" that violate the OML. As noted in the memo, this law provides that a committee member "may lawfully email a quorum of the public body only to discuss scheduling a meeting, distribute a meeting agenda, or to distribute reports or documents to be discussed at a meeting, provided that no opinion of a member of the public body is expressed." For example, a consultant's report (with no board member commentary) could be distributed, but not a draft composite evaluation of a Town Administrator that reflected opinions of individual board members. "Meeting scheduling, agendas, or other relevant documents" may be distributed "provided such documents were either prepared by a non-board member or do not express any opinions."

After discussion, the Commission agreed that further clarification is needed as follows:

- (1) Does this mean that any draft policy, goal statement, or a proposed letter or other communication from the Commission drafted by a member may not be distributed to the members for review before the meeting discussion?
- (2) Can draft meeting minutes prepared by members be distributed for review before discussion and approval at the meeting?
- (3) If the COD posted its meeting packets – or portions thereof – on the Town website (like the BOS), could members then review drafts before the meeting discussion?
- (4) Can members email liaison reports that describe what has happened at other meetings or to share information about upcoming events?

PG will contact the Town Manager and/or state officials for further information.

Meeting Schedule

The Commission agreed that for the short-term, not in perpetuity, it will meet twice monthly. The general plan is to meet on the second Mondays for matters related to re-establishing the Commission (goals, policies, etc.) and other housekeeping matters and to meet on the fourth Monday to address specific topics or meet with relevant people concerning the Commission's work. Meetings were added for March 11 and April 8.

ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan

As the Commission seeks to initiate a formal ADA Self-Evaluation, some of the next steps were considered. Representative Carmine Gentile will attend the COD's March 25 meeting, when the Commission will talk with him about options to pursue state funding. PG has also reached out to Senator Jamie Eldridge concerning this topic. The primary cost would be for a consultant to conduct the assessment.

The group addressed its understanding that Facilities Director Bill Barletta would have facilities oversight of this process and that DPW Director Dan Nason would be responsible for assessment of walkways and roads. The members agreed that we need to learn more about how to best coordinate with Town staff concerning planning for a Self-Evaluation.

Member Reports

- SI reported that the Transportation Committee is continuing to focus on piloting a program to assist with rides for medical appointments. The Committee has met with Emerson Hospital representatives about partnering on this initiative and will soon meet with the Uber and Lyft ride-hailing companies about medical transport programs in which they have participated.
- PG described the most recent Master Plan Steering Committee meeting. To assist the visioning process, the Steering Committee focused on developing "elevator speeches" about Sudbury. They also identified areas to be addressed in the Master Plan which will include zoning, transportation, sewer, and connectivity.
- LK stated that the SPS School Committee has expressed concerns about not being represented on the Master Plan Steering Committee. They have been told that SPS will be involved in the process but that the Steering Committee membership will not likely be altered.
- LK reported that she has reached out to Selectmen Dan Carty about concerns that Sudbury students are not being admitted to Assabet Valley Regional Technical High

School. The COD has previously discussed the concern that Sudbury is not a member town of any vocational-technical high school, which limits options for our students finding the best placement. All agreed that we want an update from the Town on this issue.

- KB described a parent forum that the SPS SEPAC held with the Superintendent and the Interim Director of Student Services. Also, they are organizing an event about public safety with Police Chief Nix to be held on March 14, at 7:00 pm, at the Police Station.
- LK reported that the Unified Games (in which an athlete with disabilities is joined by a typical peer to participate) will be held on May 3. She will send information to KB for webpage posting.

Meeting with Lincoln-Sudbury RHS Buildings and Grounds Director

PG and KB reported on their meeting with Kevin Rossley, Buildings and Grounds Director. He provided a tour of the school and they addressed multiple issues.

- They discussed the Commission's concern about the parking spot that blocks access to the pathway from a crosswalk on Lincoln Road. Mr. Rossley is planning to stripe a crosswalk from the path leading to a curb cut in the sidewalk at the entrance of LSRHS as well as the parking space. He had already placed cones in the space.
- Accessible access to the stadium and primary playing fields is provided by golf carts along paved paths. Nonetheless, there are other fields that cannot be accessed by the paved paths and thus are less accessible.
- The auditorium continues to present access challenges. One of the three exits is not accessible.
- Mr. Rossley stated that LS will consult with the COD for input as they plan for the rehabilitation of the (former) White House Preschool building.
- On February 10, a later input from a community member raised other access issues including impediments to gym access from teacher parking, plowing issues, and curb cuts.

Recruitment Efforts

The Commission briefly discussed the need to continue its recruitment efforts, especially in light of SI's anticipated departure. Another member will need to be appointed to represent the Commission on the Transportation Committee.

SMILE Mass

Lotte Diomede (prior Chair of the Sudbury COD), assisted by Susan Brown, provided an overview of SMILE Mass, a nine-year-old nonprofit organization which aims to help families raising children and adults with disabilities enjoy happy, healthy memories through vacation and recreation experiences. SMILE Mass was instrumental in the Town's building of the accessible playground at Haskell Field.

Ms. Diomede provided an overview of the SMILE Mass programs, including:

- Beach Wheelchair Program: providing over 130 specialized beach wheelchairs to be used on MA beaches

- Equipment Loaner Program: maintaining special equipment, such as temporary ramps, bikes, transfer chairs, bath chairs, or specialized strollers, that may be loaned to individuals or to schools (e.g., for a field trip).
- Sponsorship of recreational events (e.g., swimming, yoga)
- An accessible vacation rental home in Truro, MA

The organization also works with schools on accessible playgrounds and is planning for an accessible gym.

SMILE Mass seeks to partner with Commissions on Disabilities on programs or events that benefit their towns. They see opportunities for funding assistance from the Commission revenues generated by parking fines. Further, the group discussed how the Sudbury Commission could help share information about the resources provided by SMILE Mass using its webpage and other avenues.

There was discussion of some of the challenges in Sudbury, especially relating to the conditions at the Fairbank Community Center. Ms. Diomede described programs they have conducted in Sudbury (e.g., cooking class at Duck Soup) or in nearby towns. They are looking for grants to provide more activities, especially after-school events.

Outreach Efforts

- PG raised the idea of partnering with Goodnow Library on sponsoring programs, suggesting a program on food allergies. She distributed information from the Asthma and Allergy Foundation.
- The group discussed the desire to meet with the Board of Health to talk about various issues including the use of food in public buildings.
- KB talked about her ongoing efforts to update the COD webpage and to share items on the Town Facebook page. The members discussed a potential “Did You Know?” item that could highlight helpful information, such as the availability of borrowing equipment from SMILE Mass.
- PG shared statistical data about the Sudbury population and other information that will help inform the Commission’s work.

Adjournment

VOTE: Upon a motion by Lisa Kouchakdjian, seconded by Kay Bell, the meeting was adjourned at 1:22 pm.

The Commission approved these minutes on March 25, 2019.

A true copy attest: _____
 Secretary Date