

APRIL 7, 1993

ARTICLE 11 ACCEPT GENERAL LAWS CHAPTER 40, SECTION 8J
CREATE COMMISSION ON DISABILITY

To see if the Town will vote to accept Chapter 40, Section 8J of the Massachusetts General laws, which provides the authorization to cities and towns to establish a permanent Commission on Disability for the purpose of developing, coordinating or carrying out programs designed to meet the needs of persons with disabilities, in cooperation with the Massachusetts Office on Disability and Town agencies, and to raise and appropriate or transfer from available funds a sum of money for this purpose; or act on anything relative thereto.

Submitted by the Board of Selectmen and Town Clerk

John Drobinski of the Board of Selectmen *moved to accept Chapter 40, Section 8J of the Massachusetts General Laws, which provides the authorization to cities and towns to establish a permanent commission on disability for the purpose of developing, coordinating or carrying out programs designed to meet the needs of persons with disabilities, in cooperation with the Massachusetts Office on Disability and Town Agencies.* The motion was seconded.

Finance Committee Report: (J. Haughey) The Committee took no position on this article.

Irena P. Schmid of Austin Road, one of the two residents who originally presented the idea of a Sudbury Commission on Disability to the Board of Selectmen, addressed the Hall and noted the purpose of the Commission would be to act as a resource for the Town's disabled citizens as well as business community. The Commission would provide support services, referrals, disability awareness information and educational training programs. There are presently 135 active Commissions throughout the State. Ms Schmid having worked directly with the Acton Commission, spoke with first-hand knowledge as to many of the on-going accomplishments in that community.

Site visits are made to employers, upon request, to talk with them about compliance with the Americans Disability Act (ADA). A needs analysis was conducted to determine those residents in Acton who are disabled, so as to address their needs, many training programs have been sponsored by the Commission. Strikingly as it may sound, Ms. Schmid noted there are 43 million disabled Americans, which represents one out of every six individuals. As to how many there are in Sudbury, at this time there is no accurate figure, but it was certain Sudbury is well represented in those statistics. With the passage of the ADA of 1990, the "civil rights" of all individuals with disabilities has been assured, as the provisions of ADA prohibit discrimination in the areas of public accommodation, private sector employment, transportation, state and local government services and telecommunications. ADA is a very comprehensive piece of federal legislation.

As of July 26, 1992, all businesses with 25 or more employees are required to comply with the employment provisions of the ADA. Ms. Schmid pointed out that attitudes cannot be legislated no matter how good a piece of legislation may be. There are still many myths, stereotypes and fears which prevent disabled people from enjoying full participation in our society and our community. The breakdown of barriers, the dispelling of myths and the allaying of our fears take time and resources. Sudbury has already made strides and demonstrated its commitment to these issues through the work of the Sudbury Access Advisory Group, Bob Williams, Jack Hepting, Jean MacKenzie and the ADA Employment Task Force.

The Task Force reviewed all the employment practices and policies presently in place in the Town and the Schools. The Town, she reported, is in very good shape in many areas; however, there are some things that need to be fine tuned and worked upon.

Addressing the funding for the Commission, Ms. Schmid noted that she was under the impression this would initially come from handicapped parking violations here in Town, as well as donations in-kind from many local employers and companies. As many employers are very active in this area, she was confident they would donate some services.

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Otherwise, the Commission plans to be self-supporting. The benefits to be derived from the Commission, she observed, will impact all of us. The disabled of our community need a forum and a support network. For the most part, businesses want to comply with the provisions of ADA. However, many of them do not know where to start and they need referrals and resources. Sudbury's Commission on Disability would be where to find these referrals and resources.

After some discussion both in support and opposition, a motion to amend was presented to the voters by Thomas Hillery of Willow Road, move to add to end of the motion '*such Commission shall consist of five members.*' The motion was seconded.

Selectmen Blacker spoke to the defeat of the motion to amend, but supported the main motion noting that such a Commission would reach a segment of the population that doesn't have anyone who is acting for them. He further noted there are other commissions, such as the Council on Aging, and they all work.

The motion to amend failed

The main motion under Article 11 was VOTED a hand vote.