



TOWN OF SHREWSBURY

Richard D. Carney Municipal Office Building
100 Maple Avenue
Shrewsbury, Massachusetts 01545-5398

Commission on Disabilities (CoD) Meeting Minutes September 12, 2023

Attendees: Deb DeIDotto – Chairperson, Susanna Meyer, Ashley Falandys, Diane Tonelli, Leonora Ryan.
And via phone-Charbel Sakr. Guest speaker: Laurel Rossiter.

1. Meeting called to order 7:04pm
2. Meeting minutes from July 11th, 2023, presented and corrections in spelling made. Once completed Motion to approve minutes with changes and seconded: all approved: Deb DeIDotto – Chairperson, Susanna Meyer, Ashley Falandys, Diane Tonelli, Charbel Sakr and Leonora Ryan.
3. Appointments/Meetings/Announcements
 - a. Meeting with the Director of Recreation, Laurel Rossiter, CTRS- she presented her role, background and she stated some changes she has made to the Recreation Department including that she has increased the recreation department staff to better meet the needs of the town. The Recreation Dept. runs the farmers market, Food Truck Thursdays, Dean Park Concerts, Donovan Rowing Center and the 2 boat ramps and Easter Egg Hunt. This includes areas of events and adaptive programs. Laurel stated she has noticed that there is a lack of adaptive programs and programming. The first adaptive tennis lessons event was set for yesterday – but postponed due to weather. She is looking forward to partnering with folks in Shrewsbury to offer more programs and sports.
 - i. Ideas in the idea and planning phase include a community buddy program in the recreation department. This includes social programs and pajama movie night. She plans to use the schools and the senior center for events spaces.
 - ii. Deb added that Shrewsbury needs this change. There are youth that sports aren't their 'cup of tea'. Laurel offered that science programs, Dungeons and Dragons and other non-sports programs are needed. She added that having a 'rec center' would be ideal for the future.
 - iii. Laurel stated they did do a survey with parent meeting groups and got some good information. The recreation department is for both children and adults. Special Olympics is a partnership with the Town Recreation Department. They help with sign ups and organizing, and Shrewsbury does host teams.
 - iv. Charbel presented that one hurdle for a blind parent is that it's hard to get the children to the programs. Additionally, he stated that adult programs for blind would be good. He will review programs at state level and share

information with Laurel. Laurel stated she will look into getting programs for blind people.

4. New Business

- a. Discuss Spirit of Shrewsbury event on September 23, 2023 – Commission on Disabilities booth
- b. Review of set up and activities
 - i. materials (handouts): town disability recognition program business awards flyer, poster, banner, rulers -handout, resource list,
 - ii. Ashley has created a sensory task that people can do. It's filling playdough into a balloon.
 - iii. Susanne presented suggestion of her set up for Hearing Loss from Noise. She has ear plugs to give out and flyers that share info.
 1. Diane suggested adding a flyer that has QR code of a sound level app.
 - iv. Justin has a tent, weights, tables, and 2-3 chairs. The event is from 10am to 4pm.
- c. Business Recognition Award
 - i. The flyer needs to be updated with the Chair name.
 - ii. Charbel shared that he'd like to see Prya presented with an award. Deb to review with Justin.
- d. Updates on Hearing Assistive Technology (HAT) for the Senior Center.
 - i. Susanna presented: (in first person) After the July 11 COD Meeting, I arranged to meet Holly Lucht (Director of Council Aging) and Renee D'Argento (Outreach Coordinator) on July 18 at the Shrewsbury Senior Center. Both Holly and Renee indicated their support for the COD to investigate HAT for the Senior Center.

Renee indicated that she made previous unsuccessful attempts to acquire HAT. I visited Hall A and B in the Senior Center typically used for presentations and group functions. I to make rough measurements to present to the HAT providers. Renee and I agreed to obtain quotes from local companies that will provide installation as well as maintenance visits. I reached out to several companies in MA. In addition, Justin Dobson contacted the Ockers Company that recently installed PA systems for the Shrewsbury Police Department.

I also reached out to a Shrewsbury audiologist, Dr. Lesley Soiles, to get an idea about the fitting of hearing aid technology compatible with HAT via electromagnetic and/or Bluetooth capabilities. She indicated that about 90% of hearing aids in the past 3 years have electromagnetic capabilities, but it may not be activated in all hearing aids. Most newer generation hearing aids have Bluetooth capabilities. The fitting trend is to move to hearing aids with Bluetooth capabilities.

Ockers Company provided a comprehensive quote for HATs. The Listen EVERYWHERE technology provides both electromagnetic and Bluetooth compatibility with hearing aids, utilizing the town's Wifi technology. Seniors can access the technology by requesting a smart lanyard receiver or by downloading the free Listen EVERYWHERE app, available for both Apple and Android devices. The technology is \$2,500.00 per system (including two neck loops, receivers, and signage indicating the availability of assistive listening systems).

Justin approached the town's IT team who reviewed the specification sheets. They are confident that it will be compatible with the Town's Wifi. On Sept 6, Justin consulted with the town's staff regarding the MA Office on Disability ADA Grant Application for 7 sites in need of HAT as indicated by the ADA Transition Plan. Justin is preparing the grant application with a deadline of September 15. Justin plans to submit a grant for 7 sites.

- ii. Diane added that this information would be a great education topic for Shrewsbury Chamber of Commerce/Town Businesses
 - e. Paratransit/WRTA: Cynthia Willis is to be invited to present on Paratransit Services changes at the November 14th meeting. Charbel presented that he had concerns with the service after Cynthia's last presentation. Charbel tried the service last month and the ride offered was to have the van pick him up 70 minutes prior to the appointment + 20 minutes waiting time prior. He did not use the service due to time and Paratransit's parameters. Charbel submitted a list of suggestions to Deb in the past. Deb will present to Cynthia the concerns and ask that she speak about the concerns for a portion of time at the presentation.
5. Old Business
- a. Library event for Children with disabilities
 - i. Ashley met with Priya and Sonja at library with a date on March 23rd in the afternoon.
 - ii. The plan is as follows: Laurel, Rec Dept, and CPAC are supporting the event. CPAC will support financially also. The event will be organized with support from an event planner. There will be tables of tasks and information from various vendors/clubs. The library will support and promote the event with March being a themed month of books, webinars, events.
 - iii. Ashley stated that a focus will be to assess areas and plans for accessibility. Diane offered her support in this area to Ashley.
 - iv. Next the final times and event needs to be named. One idea "Together we Play".
6. Town Applications
- a. Transfer of Liquor license- this application had no variance request, but the business has accessibility issues. We will review with Justin at the next meeting.
7. Other Business:
- a. Diane is attending the Dementia Friendly Kick-Off Meeting at Senior Center on Sept 26, 2023.
8. Meeting motion to Adjourn 8:48pm. All in favor Deb DelDotto – Chairperson, Susanna Meyer, Ashley Falandys, Diane Tonelli, Charbel Sakr and Leonora Ryan.

Next meeting scheduled for November 14th, 2023, or earlier if necessary.

Respectfully Submitted,
Diane C Tonelli