



## Hingham Commission on Disabilities

**DATE:** Wednesday, November 9, 2022

**TIME:** 7:00 pm

**PLACE:** Remote Meeting via Zoom

**Members Present:** Stephanie Gertz, Chair; Diane DeNapoli, Vice-Chair; Megan Baker, Secretary; Sharon Allen, Keith Jermyn, SCPO; Jane McGrath

**Members Absent:** Mike Clancy

**Staff Present:** None

### Call to Order

At 7:00 p.m., Chair Gertz called the meeting to order, read the Open Meeting Law statement, and asked whether anyone is recording the meeting. No response. The Town of Hingham is recording the meeting.

### Public Comments

There were none.

### Opening Remarks

Chair Gertz declared it is imperative to say, although not a voting body and the CoD is completely apolitical, she is excited there are no more political ads on this post-Election Day!

### Good & Welfare

There were no reports.

### Review of Minutes

Future minutes will be circulated prior to the next meeting.

**MOTION:** **S. Allen moved to approve the July 2022 meeting minutes as edited by Ms. Baker.**

**SECONDED:** S. Gertz

**ROLL CALL VOTE:** S. Allen, aye; M. Baker, aye; D. DeNapoli, aye; S. Gertz, aye; Jane McGrath, aye.

**MOTION CARRIES:** 5-0

**MOTION:** **D. DeNapoli moved to approve the September 2022 meeting minutes.**

**SECONDED:** S. Allen

**ROLL CALL VOTE:** S. Allen, aye; M. Baker, aye; D. DeNapoli, aye; S. Gertz, aye; Jane McGrath, aye.

**MOTION CARRIES:** 5-0

At 7:04 pm, Keith Jermyn joined the meeting.

**MOTION:** **J. McGrath moved to approve the October 2022 meeting minutes as edited by Ms. Baker.**

**SECONDED:** S. Allen

**ROLL CALL VOTE:** S. Allen, aye; M. Baker, aye; D. DeNapoli, aye; S. Gertz, aye; K. Jermyn, SCPO, aye; Jane McGrath, aye.

**MOTION CARRIES:** 6-0

## **Debrief on Town Meeting/Voting**

### **Accessibility of Town Meeting**

- Ms. Gertz noted an issue with accessibility to be heard as the microphone near her seat did not work.
- She had to walk to the front of the Auditorium to speak into a microphone.
- Had she been in a wheelchair she would not have been able to get to the front of the room to speak.
- A technical glitch for everyone else is more of a glitch for disabled persons.
- Ms. Baker suggested an attendant to hand the microphone to anyone who raises their hand to be heard.
- S. Gertz suggested microphone handlers in two or three places in the Auditorium.
- Ms. DeNapoli the sound was very choppy; she could not hear at all.
- The close captioning was erratic, at the top of the screen, at the bottom of the screen.
- Members agreed the internet connectivity in the high school never works.
- Ms. Baker suggests hiring a contractor to type the live meetings so the audience can see what is being said. She has experience finding contractors in her former job. Contractors need 3-4 month's notice.
- Ms. Allen said the Cafeteria was well lit, flat, and everything could be heard. She recommended people use the Cafeteria if they have mobility issues or a wheelchair, and it is close to the gymnasium.
- No one from the CoD was in the tent or gymnasium so they could not account for accessibility.

### **Voting Day Accessibility**

- One member placed a ballot in the ballot box outside Town Hall from a drive-up position in her car. It was super accessible, well-marked and easily located. She observed elderly persons using it without difficulty.
- One member voted at the high school. He did not recall seeing height-restricted, low voting booths.
- One member used the "auto mark" machine at Town Hall and was very impressed at its ease of use.
- There were no on-line complaints about accessibility.
- There was parking added in the rear at the high school.
- Parking was added to the side of the middle school.

## **Update on Town Hall Info**

### **Budget**

Mr. Jermyn followed up with the Town via e-mail and spoke with two employees he regularly processes funds through regarding the **balance of CoD funds received from handicapped parking fines, etc.** The employee indicated he would have to speak with Art Robert or Tom Mayo. He was told to give the Town some time to give a reply.

Ms. DeNapoli spoke with Art Robert who said **the balance of CoD funds from handicapped parking?** would be a topic on the next Select Board agenda. Chair Gertz would like one or more members to attend the meeting.

### **ADA Survey**

Ms. DeNapoli said members the Commission on Disabilities need access to the entire ADA Survey, not just the summary, but the actual Survey itself.

## **Report from Liaisons**

Human Rights Commission

- Ms. Gertz said the Commission is establishing goals now. The goal is to make Hingham inclusive and welcoming.
- She asked members if she should ask the Human Rights Commission to make a proclamation that October is Human Rights month. Members were not enthusiastic. She said these are lifelong, year-round issues so some people may feel that proclaiming one month means you can ignore the issue the rest of the year.
- She invited members to consider any opportunities they would like the Commission to co-sponsor.

### **ADU Study Committee's Report at the Planning Meeting**

- Ms. DeNapoli reported the Planning Board had their third meeting to discuss the ADU Study Committee's Report and whether to modify the By-law.
- In attendance were members of the Planning Board, the Affordable Housing Trust, and the ADU Study Committee which includes Ms. DeNapoli. Ms. Allen also attended.
- The Planning Board has until December 1 to suggest modifying the By-law in a warrant
- The "spirit" of the By-law has been changed from "familial" to "rental" to "affordable housing".
  - Nothing in Hingham is truly affordable for disabled constituents.
  - K. Jermyn sent an article of what Scituate is doing to make ADUs affordable for the homeowner.
  - Salem is exempting the ADU from the tax base for the homeowner.
  - Salem's use of ADUs can be for a family member, a veteran, or a municipal employee.
  - Salem is putting teeth in their ADU By-law to assist the homeowner to recover their investment.
  - There are other incentives to put teeth behind "affordable" housing. How could someone make a \$400,000 investment and not expect to get fair market value for their house to pay off that debt?
  - The various committees see a need for affordable housing and view the problem from different angles.
  - There is room for compromise and growth there, but the current By-law needs revision because there is no language there to exclude or control rents or deeds.
  - Let's look at the By-law if we had some affordability. Let's think outside the box.
  - The discussion going into this process was to have a By-law for family, an adult child or someone to age in place, but the discussion coming out of the process is affordable housing for all.
- Let's look at creating housing for people with disabilities. When will we have this conversation in Town?
- She introduced an idea that a contractor in town might build an ADU for less money if they get an incentive.
- There are 1,400 units to be built at the shipyard because the MBTA is coming to Hingham.
- She feels the ADU Study Committee isn't taking the CoD seriously and referred to the Commission as the "disabilities group". She was not allowed to make rebuttal when someone used this phrase.
- She feels frustrated the CoD submitted letters but the concerns in the letters were not addressed.

Ms. DeNapoli said the CoD should get a better handle on affordable housing. We do not know what is going on with the Selectmen's Parcel which is supposed to be for people with disabilities. Other groups are looking at Hingham housing such as the Master Plan Implementation Team, Fair Housing, Housing Development, South Hingham Development. How do we engage with these groups? Should we have a liaison? Ms. Gertz will follow-up with the Select Board to see if they feel CoD should be involved with these groups.

Ms. Allen disagreed that the ADU Study Committee is not listening to the Commission on Disabilities. There are a lot of checks and balances.

Ms. Allen said it would be lovely for a lottery preference to be held for a disabled young adult so they could live independently in Hingham where their family resides rather than live 30 minutes outside of Hingham.

Ms. Gertz asked members how they felt about asking the Select Board to consider the Commission on Disabilities would like a seat on the Affordable Housing Trust.

### **Scituate Accessibility Event**

Ms. Gertz will send members an email about the event once she has spoken with the Scituate Chair. They had an amazing, wonderful, giant Resource Fair on October 22, 2022 with groups from around town and national groups. She will send members the news clip YouTube video. The MS Society was present (Multiple Sclerosis), and the Scituate Public Library. Groups promoted their accessibility services. She wants to learn from Scituate whether this was an annual event; how hard was this to put on; does Hingham want to do it with Scituate next year; should we do it together? What are their thoughts about doing one for the South Shore, or keeping it just the Town? This will be discussed in more detail at the next meeting.

### **Goals**

- Ms. Gertz asked members what are their goals. She would like to include a Resource Fair event.
- Mr. Jermyn would like to see the ADA Survey Report. He finds places to walk are inaccessible or he has to walk in the street. Hingham needs a lot of infrastructure work to meet accessibility needs.
- Hingham citizens need education about different types of service dogs: comfort dogs, therapy dogs, dogs for the hearing impaired so they don't inadvertently with the work of service dogs and violate the rights of disabled citizens. He has lived in Hingham all his life and never encountered a service dog.

### **Matters not reasonably anticipated by the Chair 48 hours in advance of the meeting**

Ms. Baker discussed the new Hingham Working Dog Foundation of which she is one of four members and growing. They are developing a logo. She made some suggestions:

- The Foundation will be introduced to Hingham citizens at the Holiday Fair on November 19th.
- The Foundation plans to fundraise for service dogs, not police dogs.
- The Foundation needs 10 more volunteers for their table at the Holiday Fair
- Members discussed whether CoD collaborate with the Foundation.
- Mr. Jermyn will speak with Tom Mayo who has information about the table at the Holiday Fair
- Tom Mayo would have information about how many service dogs will be present at the table.
- Needham may consider doing a brochure presentation for Hingham.
- Members discussed revamping a brochure which disabled persons could offer to citizens as they encounter them with their unleashed dogs.

Ms. Gertz suggested one of the service dogs has his own business cards. That is an option.

Members wished Mr. Jermyn a happy Veterans' Day and thanked him for his services.

Ms. Allen expressed gratitude to Mr. Jermyn as well as Ms. DeNapoli for her attendance at ADU Study Committee meetings, also to Ms. Baker for starting up the Working Dog Foundation, and for Ms. McGrath for joining the Commission on Disabilities.

### **Next Meeting Date**

January 18, 2023

### **Adjourn**

**MOTION:**

**Ms. Baker moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:24 pm.**

**SECONDED:**

S. Allen

**ROLL CALL VOTE:**

S. Allen, aye; M. Baker, aye; D. DeNapoli, aye; S. Gertz, aye; K. Jermyn, SCPO, aye; Jane McGrath, aye.

**MOTION CARRIES: 7-0**

Respectfully submitted,

Dale Michaud  
Recording Secretary