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TOWN OF SWAMPSCOTT COMMISSION ON DISABILITY

MEETING MINUTES

September 12, 2023 6:00 P.M.

VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

MEMBERS PRESENT: LAUREN SHRESTHA, JEFFRY BRAND, JILL SUSARREY, VIRGINIA ZELLER,

MEMBERS ABSENT: JEFFREY BLONDER

OTHER TOWN OFFICIALS ABSENT: MARY ELLEN FLETCHER, SELECT BOARD LIAISON

A. INTRODUCTIONS

- New member, Lauren Shrestha, introduced herself and existing members introduced themselves.

B. ELECTION OF NEW OFFICERS

- The committee voted unanimously to make Jill Susarrey the new chair, Virginia Zeller the new vice chair, and Lauren Shrestha the new secretary.

C. DISCUSS MEETING FREQUENCY AND DATES GOING FORWARD

- The committee decided that all future meetings will be held on the third Monday of every month at 06:30 p.m. beginning with next month's meeting on October 16, 2023, at 06:30 p.m.

D. RESPONSIBILITIES

- As chair, Jill Susarrey will manage the commission's Facebook page, but any suggestions for posts can be sent to Jill Susarrey
- As chair, Jill Susarrey will also monitor the commission's email inbox and alert the other commission members if any emails of note come through.

E. DISCUSSION OF PRIORITIES AND INITIATIVES

- Jill Susarrey expressed concern about the accessibility of committee and commission meetings throughout the town. She disapproves that the select board recently chose to meet in a location (a chapel) that did not allow for the meeting to be telecast. Jill Susarrey does not believe the select board will do this again in the future, but she asked the commission's permission to write a formal letter to the select board expressing that it is not acceptable to not telecast the select board meetings to the public. The commission voted unanimously to allow Jill Susarrey to draft a letter as she feels fit and send it to the select board on the behalf of the Commission on Disability. Mary Ellen Fletcher informed the commission that the agenda and meeting location is determined by the chairman (David Grishman), so the choice to meet at the chapel was done by the chairman not the other select board members.
- Jill Susarrey expressed her desire to circle back on an initiative that former commission member, Debora Newman, had been working on, which is improving beach access in the town. Debora Newman's family had also donated a water wheelchair a few months ago that is currently sitting unused as the schematics of its use (sign in and out) and maintenance (cleaning) are still yet to be determined.
- Virginia Zeller expressed her concern that the new Swampscott elementary school that is being built will not be accessible for hearing impaired individuals. Virginia's suggestion was for a hearing loop to be installed in the new school's auditorium. Virginia said this will not only benefit hearing-impaired children but also other hearing-impaired individuals who may attend meetings or events at the auditorium. A hearing loop is physical cables that are placed around the desired location (the auditorium in this case) and these cables act as conductors of sound which they transmit to the t-coils found in many hearing devices. Mary Ellen Fletcher said that she would provide Virginia Zeller with the contact information for the School Building Committee chair), Suzanne Wright.

- Virginia Zeller also expressed her desire for street signs to be put up near her primary residence that notifies drivers that individuals that are hard of hearing live on her street. Virginia said that there are four other individuals living on her street that are also deaf. Jill Susarrey recommended that Virginia get in touch with Gino Cresta Jr. who is the Director of Public Works in Swampscott, to discuss the viability and mechanics of getting the signs added.
- Jeff Brand expressed his desire to investigate adding benches to some of the hiking trails in town. Jill Susarrey suggested looking into relocating some of the existing memorial benches in town to the hiking trails in question. Mary Ellen Fletcher suggested reaching out to Gino A. Cresta Jr. who is the Director of Public Works in Swampscott, to discuss the viability and mechanics of getting benches added to hiking trails in town.
- Lauren Shrestha expressed her concern that the recently remodeled swing area and small children playground next to the Abbott Park playground (currently being used by the Clarke Elementary School children as well as the public) is not fully fenced in which creates a huge safety risk for autistic children in our town who are prone to elope and run without any sense of danger. The current fence situation leaves a huge opening facing the basketball court and there is no fence around the basketball court that prevents children from running out through the opening in the stone wall into the busy street (Paradise Road; 1A). Jill Susarrey said that she will email a contact Lauren can approach to work on mitigating the issue.

F. PUBLIC COMMENT

- NONE

Upon motion, it was unanimously voted to adjourn at approximately 07:05 P.M.

True Attest,

Lauren Shrestha, Secretary, Commission on Disability