

Westwood Disability Commission
January 11, 2019 9:15 A.M.
Selectmen's Meeting Room, Town Hall

Minutes

Attendees:

Commission Members: Anne Berry-Goodfellow, MaryAnne Carty, Marianne Leblanc, Jette Meglan, Jude O'Hara, Connie Rizoli, Mary Sethna,

Agenda item: Approval of Minutes

November 9, 2018 Minutes Approved.

Agenda item: New Business – Revised meeting date in February

The Commission will meet on February 15, 2019 instead of February 8, 2019 as previously scheduled.

Select Board Chair Michael Walsh and Town Administrator Michael Jaillet will attend. -

Agenda item: New Business – Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP)

The Open Space and Recreation Planning Committee has been meeting since November 17, 2017 to develop a vision for the use of conservation and recreation properties in Westwood. Details of the process for plan development are available on the Town Website at

http://www.townhall.westwood.ma.us/gov/boardcomm/active_boards_committees_n_commissions/open_space_and_recreation_plan_committee/default.htm

In November 2018, the Committee forwarded a draft plan to the Planning Board for consideration. A separate component of the draft plan, a draft Appendix including an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) self evaluation and transition plan was forwarded to MaryAnne Carty for consideration by the Commission.

The Planning Board discussed aspects of the Plan at its meetings on December 11, 2018, and January 8, 2019, and plans to continue its deliberations at its January 29, 2019 meeting.

Members of the Commission on Disability reviewed the ADA Appendix and commented further on access issues at the sites included in the self evaluation. The Appendix does not contain any transition plan to increase accessibility.

- Access to Lowell Woods is blocked by a boulder that prevents access by someone using a wheelchair. Parking spaces are provided but there is no handicapped parking

- Morrison Field is rated as providing “Excellent access” despite the lack of access to the softball field, the lack of accessible seating at the softball field, the location of an accessible picnic table in an inaccessible location and no signage for visual impairment.
- At Sheehan School, the Handicapped Parking space was difficult to use to transport a passenger because of its location on a curve and the one way traffic pattern.
- Conservation properties are listed as providing “public access,” but accessibility and topographical information is not available. Jude O’Hara referenced and recommended the use of a phone app now in use on Martha’s Vineyard that provides this information on Vineyard trails. (See: <https://sheriffsmeadow.org/latest-news/trailsmv-app/>)
- The June Street playground is not included in the self evaluation.
- The Swimming Pool is not included in the self evaluation.
- Some, but not all of the public school facilities are included.

The Commission noted that the OSRP is an aspirational plan and includes ideas such as an ice skating rink and an indoor recreation facility that are not otherwise required. The OSRP references expanding opportunities for individuals with disabilities and senior citizens although the plan does not include specific recommendations. The Commission identified potential opportunities that would provide access to individuals with disabilities:

- a “beach” wheelchair to provide access to uneven terrain,
- an accessible portable bathroom would provide universal access,
- braille, high contrast and large print signage, and posts with guide ropes would aid individuals with visual impairments
- benches, or strategically placed boulders along trails would allow senior citizens and others to rest periodically
- a paved path around a pond could provide universal access to Buckmaster, Haslam or other ponds,
- an existing path from Martha Jones School to Tamarack Road could be improved to provide universal access.

Members of the Commission will reach out to individuals who are familiar with conservation properties to get an idea of sites that would be suitable for accessibility improvements. We will also reach out to the Council on Aging to determine if there are recommendations to improve access for senior citizens.

Members are encouraged to attend the Planning Board Hearing on the OSRP on January 29, 2019 to recommend measures that will provide universal and handicapped access to conservation areas and recreation facilities.

Agenda item: Adjournment and Next Meeting

The Commission will meet on January 25, 2019 at 9:15 to finalize our comments on the OSRP for presentation to the Planning Board.