

**Commission for Accessibility
Meeting Minutes
Monday, June 13, 2022**

Via Zoom

In Attendance: Tony Phillips, Christine Santori, Dave Choplinski, Maureen Culhane, Don Ciota

Call to Order: 5:00 PM

Public Comment

The Commission had a visitor, Mr. Michael Londrigan, who has expressed an interest in learning about and perhaps joining us.

Michael is an Associate Professor and Chair of the Business Department with LIM College in New York City.

Parking Accessibility at Tiger Hollow: Town Handicapped Parking

At our last commission meeting on May 9, we discussed a reoccurring problem related to handicapped parking spaces at Tiger Hollow being occupied by cars without permits, which has led to a number of complaints to the commission over the years. At that meeting we discussed several initiatives, which appear in the minutes, for consideration in the effort to resolve the issue.

A meeting to discuss this matter was set up on June 9 with representatives of the Ridgefield Public Schools. The participants were Elizabeth Hannaway, Assistant Superintendent of Special Services, Dane Street, Athletic Director, Tony Phillips, Town ADA Coordinator, and Don Ciota, Chairman, Commission for Accessibility.

A synopsis of what was discussed follows here. Tiger Hollow is used for school activities, many of which occur after school hours, in the evenings, and on weekends, often when no school grounds personnel are on duty who could assist in monitoring the parking. Since Tiger Hollow is located at the high school, which is out of town, it doesn't receive specific enforcement of parking issues. The parking area for this field is adjacent to the pavilion leading to the stands. There are 8 handicapped spots with signs designating them as such, and 3 non-handicapped spots. Other non-handicapped spots are available within a short walk.

After a brief introduction by Don accentuating the issue, Dane informed us that as of July 1, there will be a new position for a dedicated employee at the Tiger Hollow site. While this person will have many other responsibilities, this is an excellent starting point.

At the meeting we discussed a campaign of educating/reminding the community of the need to respect handicapped parking spaces. Announcements to the students during general and athletic orientations at the beginning of the school year could be given. All coaches would also be tasked with making this point with their teams and asked to pass the information to those who may be driving them and attending the events. Since the facility is also used by outside leagues, notices would be included with any communications between the schools and the outside organization with the requirement they pass along this message to their participants. During activities announcements will be made if cars without permits are using the spaces.

Liz told us the high school has an internal ticketing initiative that could also be used. Dane suggested using cones which would partially block these spaces, but that would cause difficulty for persons using those spaces. Windshield notices could also be used to communicate the message to violators.

In a DMV study CT police chiefs discussed the issue of enforcing handicapped parking laws in areas not usually patrolled by the police. In these cases, the police would make sweeps 3 or 4 times per year, which would result in summonses, but more importantly, would raise public awareness. This concept would require the cooperation of RPD.

Tony has suggested the use of a "parking app." In this scenario information, such as photos, would be collected and the data provided to the RPD. Individuals would be trained on how to collect the data, which could be used for official warnings or summonses. Again, this will require discussion with the RPD.

In our discussions our commissioners added their own ideas. Dave wondered why this wasn't applied town-wide, an excellent observation. While this initiative is aimed at Tiger Holly as a focal point, what we learn here can be adapted for general use by the town.

Christine brought up the issue of handicap access to the various levels of the field and vehicular access for dropping off persons with disabilities in these areas. Tony displayed a map that indicates some improvements, but there are still deficiencies.

Michael, our guest, volunteered to address the student body if orientations, such as described above are scheduled. It was he who also commented about the problem that could be created by the placement of traffic cones in the parking spaces.

In conclusion, it is not merely a courtesy that they intended use of these spaces be respected, but it is also the law as embodied by the Americans with Disabilities Act. But, without enforcement, no law will stand and the "inconvenience" of a 2-minute walk to a proper parking space, will be rationalized as "reasonable" excuse to take the handicapped spot. The Commission believes with proper communication and reasonable prodding,

the students and residents of Ridgefield, and out of town guests will respond positively.

I would like to thank all the commissioners for their dedication to ensuring accessibility within the community. We have been fortunate in having enthusiastic support from town hall, the Ridgefield Schools, and the community. Since this is our last meeting before September 12, I wish you and yours a healthy
And safe summer. D.

Adjourn: 6:20

2022 Meeting Dates:

All dates are on a **Monday at 5:00PM** and will be held via Zoom until after the pandemic town deems it safe to meet in person.

		Sep. 12
		Oct. 17
Jul	no meeting	Nov 7
Aug	no meeting	Dec. 12

Minutes prepared by Don Ciota, Chairman