

**Commission for Accessibility
Meeting Minutes
Monday, March 11, 2024**

Meeting Via Zoom

In Attendance: Michael Londrigan, Maureen Culhane, Christine Santori, Tony Phillips, Don Ciota

Call to Order: 5:03 PM

Public Comment.

There was a reminder that for the balance of this week the town I.T. personnel will be installing an email address on the cell phones of BCC members. This is being done to facilitate F.O.I. requests and to ensure legal compliance with this ACT.

Follow up on ADA Private Parking Issue.

Michael gave the Commission an update on a private (business) parking issue in town. The Americans with Disabilities Act mandates standards for public access entities (Title III). Fortunately, most businesses are in compliance with this mandate. But what recourse does an individual have if an alleged violation prevents accessibility? The ADA is a complaint-based law, which is enforced by the Department of Justice. In the local case at hand, a complaint to the DOJ was initiated on-line and received a prompt response leading to a Zoom conference. It should be noted the complainant had personally notified the business owner of the violation, but did not respond to this courtesy even though such prior notice is not required by the ACT. As of the time of this meeting, this complaint is still pending.

Update on School Transition Fair.

Michael, Tony, and Don represented the Commission at this event held on March 6 at Ridgefield High School. Several dozen families attended and visited the dozen or so participants. In addition to this Commission others who attended included the Ridgefield Library, Ridgefield Police, SPHERE, Ability Beyond Disability, CT Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, CT Department of Developmental Services, and

other service-providing organizations. The event was organized by Jessica DiValentino, RFS Transition Coordinator, and attended by Elizabeth Hannaway, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent of Special Services.

This was an opportunity for the Commission to support a valuable school program aimed at enhancing the education and life-skills of students with disabilities. It also provided an opportunity for us to learn about many of the recourses available to students in this program. Publicizing such events helps as an outreach to families of children who may enter this program and to educate the community on the essential work being done here.

Freedom of Information Act

PUBLIC MEETINGS

I. MEETINGS, INCLUDING HEARINGS AND OTHER PROCEEDINGS, MUST BE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC - EXCEPT IN LIMITED SITUATIONS.

A public meeting is any hearing or other proceeding of a public agency, or gathering of, or communication by or to a quorum of a multi-member agency, to discuss or act on any matter over which it has authority.

The following are not public meetings... *communications limited to notice of agency meetings or their agendas.* (Italics added). ref: CT.gov

4.3. Meetings Subject to the Freedom of Information Act

All meetings of a BCC (board, commission, committee), that do not fall within the exceptions listed above, must be open to the public and be in compliance with the American Disability Act. (TOR Information Guidelines)

4.4. Attendance

The Town of Ridgefield official policy is that members and alternates of BCC's must attend at least 75% of all posted meetings of the BCC, for the calendar year.

If you are unable to attend the meeting, you **MUST** notify the Chairperson prior to the start of the meeting.

Protocol for Budget Expenditures

7.2. Expenses

Before a BCC member incurs expenses connected with their assignment, they must obtain approval by their chairperson, who has obtained approval of the First Selectman depending on funds available in the budget.

N.B. 4.3, 4.4, 7.2 are from TOR Information Guidelines

During this discussion the Commission spoke about the need for pre-discussion and approval for expenditures. There is an expectation that invoices for recent purchases related to the RPS Fair will be submitted for evaluation. Also, we discussed participation in the upcoming Memorial Parade. Christine will submit an outline on such a proposal.

Adjourn: 5:45PM

Minutes prepared by Don Ciota, Chairman

Meeting Dates for 2024:

April 8

July (none)

October 7

May 6

August (none)

November 18

June 10

September 9

December



Commission for Accessibility

INTRODUCTION to TRANSITION PLANNING

This paper has been prepared by the Commission for Accessibility (CfA) as an introduction the Transition Plan, an important resource which aims to maximize the individualized educational and social plans for your student. The Commission encourages you to take a part in the planning of this worthy endeavor knowing you and your child will be working with a dedicated and professional Ridgefield Schools staff, who share your interests in optimizing this experience.

The CfA is an advisory body to the Ridgefield Board of Selectman. The Commission advocates for accessibility and inclusion for all persons with disabilities, and seeks to educate the community to the rights and responsibilities memorializing such rights in civil rights and other legislation. The CfA applauds both families and school staff for the dedication, concern, and love that goes into a many years-long process that seeks to help the student develop and achieve all of which they are capable.

This introduction to *Transition Planning* was prepared for parents and family members of students with disabilities by the Town of Ridgefield Commission for Accessibility (CfA). Families new to this Transition Plan program may question what the future may hold for their child as graduation day approaches. As a child progresses through the school system it is natural to contemplate what comes next. Rest assure there are powerfully laid plans to continue the progress of preparing your child for that day.



INTRODUCTION to TRANSITION PLANNING

All the information contained herein comes from Connecticut sources. The descriptions of the programs listed are based upon what is listed by the Connecticut State Department of Education. The specifics on how all this is made a part of your child's individual program can be explained by staff.

You will read about federal laws such as the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) that mandate these programs. This and other legislation addressing the needs of the disabled are civil rights laws passed by Congress and thought of by this Commission as being laws of decency and acceptance, which reflect positively on our society.

There are many online listings of resources for these topics that go into additional detail. The Ridgefield school staff professionals are an invaluable source in guiding new families through this system.

The CfA can be contacted through the office of the Town ADA Coordinator, Tony Philips. We welcome the opportunity to be of your assistance.

Commission for Accessibility

Don Ciota, Chairman
Commission for Accessibility

Christine Santori, Commissioner
Commission for Accessibility

