

2017 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES

Commissioners: Paul Remy (Chair), Susan Friedman (Vice-Chairperson and Secretary), Geila Aronson (Treasurer), Susan Myerson, Richard Seronick, Lois Diamond, Peter Melvin, and Amy Karas

The Sharon Commission on Disabilities met ten times in 2017, and was successful with several projects in increasing accessibility for Sharon residents with disabilities.

Projects that the Commission worked on during 2017:

1. The existing Town Hall is inaccessible for people with disabilities, which violates the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). A \$1,000 fine could have been imposed on the Town if it failed to make Town Hall ADA compliant. Commission members unanimously agreed with the Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee, and Sharon Standard Committee, that building a new and accessible Town Hall will be more cost effective than renovating the present facility.

The Commission was very instrumental in helping the Town to get the proposal for constructing a new Town Hall approved. It was approved at the November 2017 special Town Meeting. For example, Chairperson Paul Remy wrote a detailed article explaining how the 55 year old Town Hall is not accessible and how a new facility would be beneficial to people with disabilities, as well as senior citizens who may develop disabling conditions due to advance aging. Rob Maidman, Chairperson of the COA Advisory Council, helped Paul to get his article published in the Sharon Advocate. Selectman JJ McGrath and Paul had a segment, on the FYI show with Colleen Tuck that aired on Sharon Community Television, about Town Hall. In addition, Jana Katz and Lois Diamond, two Commission members, made a three minute video showing how the building was inaccessible, and the Commission created and distributed flyers around town encouraging town voters to vote “Yes” on the \$13,000,000 proposed project, which was approved by the Massachusetts Access Board. The Commission was elated and relieved when town residents voted in favor of the project at the November 6 Town Meeting.

2. Two Boy Scouts, Ryan and Noah Rosenthal, completed their Eagle Scout projects which increased the accessibility at Aims Street Playground . They got suggestions from the Recreational Department and Commission. Ryan’s project was to build accessible picnic tables, and Noah’s project was constructing an accessible Gaga Pit, which is a popular playground game.

Before the actual construction began, the two Scouts had to raise funds for materials. They had a fundraiser in September of 2016 at Orange Leaf in Canton, but did not raise enough funds. So the two brothers made a \$1,500 Capital Gain request, which was approved at the May 2017 Town Meeting. This also was a good learning experience on how a local government works.

With the help from Troop 95, construction of the two projects began in August, 2017. Commission Chairperson Paul Remy was impressed while watching the team assembling the picnic tables at Aims Street Playground. He saw the team doing a professional job under the Leadership of Ryan. Geila Aronson, a Commission member, also saw the same dedication and professionalism as Noah and his team assembled the Gaga Pit.

Thanks to Noah and Ryan the accessible picnic tables and Gaga Pit are excellent additions to Aims Street Playground. Like their grandfather, Dr. Sydney Rosenthal, who helped establish the Commission in 1991, and served as its Chairperson for 17 years, the brothers have the same dedication in helping people with disabilities.

3. In May the Commission awarded a high school senior with special needs, a \$1,000 Leslie Kriger scholarship. She will be using it to help finance her college education.
4. In March, Deputy Fire Chief, Richard Murphy talked with Commission members about the efforts the Fire department is making towards better serving community members with disabilities:
 - Understanding the upgrades made to the fire code
 - Vial of Life
 - Being proactive about Town of Sharon disaster forms
 - Needles Container - Fire Department Pills Container - Police Department
 - Lock boxes for community members
5. The Commission donated \$204.00 to the Fire Department to purchase four lock boxes to benefit Sharon residents.
6. Kathleen Medeiros, Director of the Sharon Adult Center, talked with Commission members in May about transportation for Seniors within and outside of Sharon. She is working on coordinating ride services with other communities.
7. Commission members were hoping to provide funds to assist the Sharon Housing Authority, from the Massachusetts Office on Disability's municipal ADA improvement grant program, to purchase and install electric door openers in handicapped apartments. Unfortunately, the Commission did not have time to write the grant, which needed to be submitted by November 17, 2017.
8. The Commission did not receive much funding from the handicapped parking ticket program. As of January 3, 2018, the Commission's budget is:

Handicapped parking ticket fund:	\$ 203.97
Donations:	\$ 1,997.57
General fund	\$ 332.22

	\$ 2,533.76

9. Jana Katz's term expired in May and she decided not to be reappointed, because she is hoping to get accepted in the Smith College's Masters Social Work program. She will continue helping the Commission as a non-member on future projects. The Commission will definitely miss Jana
10. Richard Seronick joined the Commission in June. He is a wonderful asset, always willing to help the Commission to achieve its goals.