

2018 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES

Commissioners: Paul Remy (Chairperson), 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 nine times in 2018 and was very successful working on projects to increase accessibility for Sharon residents with disabilities.

Projects that the Commission worked on during 2018:

1. Kevin Paton, the architect who designed the new Town Hall, attended the Commission's January meeting. Chairperson Paul Remy noticed, according to his drawing of the Town Hall, it will have a brick walkway to its entrance. Commission members informed him and Gordon Gladstone, Chairperson of the Sharon Standard Building Committee, who also attended the meeting, that brick walkways are detrimental to wheelchair/scooter users and those with mobility impairments. As a result, a regular cement sidewalk will be installed instead.

The Commission has been wondering if an assistive listening system (ALS) for the hard of hearing could be internally installed in the meeting room of the new Town Hall. Kevin contacted Jonathan O'Dell from the Massachusetts Commission of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, to determine what system will be the best. An FM ALS is going to be installed in the new meeting room.

A Sharon resident who is a mobility specialist for people with visual impairments, emailed suggestions to the Commission concerning how to increase the accessibility in the new Town Hall for individuals with visual impairments. The recommendations were presented to Kevin and Gordon. Another Sharon resident, who also works with people that have sight limitations, attended the meeting and gave his suggestions. Kevin and Gordon stated that they are going to incorporate the recommendations.

Both Kevin and Gordon liked Paul's suggestion for doing a walk-through of Town Hall a month or two weeks before the completion of the facility's construction.

2. Police Chief Kaufman attended the February Commission meeting. Commission members informed him that they were concerned that the Police Department was not issuing as many tickets to drivers who illegally park in handicapped parking spots. Chief Kaufman stated that his department has been ticketing violators, especially at the Sharon Train Station. The revenue from the handicapped ticket program goes to the Commission so it can help purchase equipment and services to increase the accessibility for people with disabilities and senior citizens with special needs, in Sharon. As of January 2, 2019, the Commission had \$10,487.57 compared to \$203.97 in 2018.

3. Officer Laura Canavan from the Sharon Police Department attended the March Commission meeting and spoke about scams and how to avoid them. Because people with disabilities (as well as some senior citizens) are less knowledgeable about computer and related technologies, they are probably more vulnerable to scammers.
4. In May the Adult Center contacted the Commission and stated that a gentleman with a disability could not find a handicapped parking place near the field at Deborah Sampson Park. Paul emailed Eric Hooper, DPW's Supervisor, concerning this situation. He and Town Engineer ,Peter O'Cain, investigated the matter and discovered that the handicapped symbols needed repainting.
5. In the spring of 2018, the Sharon Housing Authority made a community garden for its residents. The Commission donated \$250 towards the purchase of a raised garden bed so that people with disabilities and senior citizens, who have disabling conditions, can participate in gardening.
6. The Commission also donated \$500 to the Sharon Housing Authority to help purchase an automatic door opener for a resident with a disability.
7. The Commission joined the Sharon Master Plan's Public Health subcommittee to give suggestions to provide better healthcare to people with disabilities and senior citizens. In addition, Paul stated that more affordable and low-income accessible housing is needed.
8. The Commission awarded a Sharon High senior with special needs, The Leslie Kriger Memorial Scholarship for \$1,000. He used the scholarship to help finance his college education.
9. In September, a Sharon senior citizen who uses a wheelchair contacted the Commission and stated that Republic, the trash pickup service for the Town of Sharon, stopped going in her backyard to pick up her trash. Living alone and being a wheelchair user, she is unable to put her trash cans on the sidewalk. Town Administrator Fred Turkington, who is also the Town's ADA Coordinator, suggested she should contact Republic, which she did. The trash removal company coded her account for trash pickup in her yard, and Commission member, Susan Myerson, called Town Hall's Business Office to have the account verified. As a result, Republic resumed picking up the woman's trash in her backyard.
10. In October, three Commission members attended Ryan and Noah Rosenthal's Eagle Scout swearing in ceremony. Both brothers helped increase the accessibility at Ames' Street Playground: 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. Their projects helped them to earn the rank of Eagle Scout.

The Commission is very proud of their accomplishments. 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.

11. A mother of an 8-year-old son contacted the Commission and asked if the Town of Sharon has an adaptive sports program for kids. Paul informed her that there were none and referred her to Access Sports America, which has several programs in the Boston area. In addition, he gave her the Sharon Recreation Director's contact information and the name of a Sharon resident who runs an inclusion activities program called "Little Stars."

12. In May, Commission member, Lois Diamond attended a two-day a Community Access Monitor workshop to learn the latest Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations.
13. Pete Melvin resigned from the Commission in December. The Commission is actively recruiting two additional Commission members.
14. The Commission received an increase in revenue, especially from the Handicapped Parking program:

Handicapped parking ticket fund:	\$ 10,487.57
Donations:	\$ 1,527.97
General fund	\$ 427.68

Total	\$ 12,443.22