

FAIRHAVEN COMMISSION ON DISABILITY

Meeting Minutes October 20, 2022

Held at Fairhaven Town Hall, 40 Center St., Fairhaven, MA. 02719

Contact: cod@Fairaven-ma.gov

Present: Town Hall: Pamela Whynot (Vice-Chair), Eleanor Chew, (Secretary)
ZOOM: Sarah Buck, Donna Maino Lavallo, Glenn Gabbard (Treasurer)
Absent: Marcus Ferro, Janice Alves, Jenna Benoit, Pamela Ferro
Guests: Fairhaven Cable TV, Cameron Durant (Staff Liaison) at town hall
ALL VOTES WERE TAKEN BY ROLL CALL VOTE.

I. CALL TO ORDER: Pamela Whynot, Vice-Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:21 p.m. and she read the State Guidelines for meetings.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Sarah Buck motioned the approval of the minutes and Glenn Gabbard seconded the motion. It was voted unanimously.

III. MEMBERSHIP: Pamela Whynot explained the change in our membership numbers. She said Marcus Ferro had reached out to the town clerk and found out that two people (Brian Rego and Diane Rocha) were never sworn in making their membership invalid. Heidi Piva and Sue Makepeace have resigned so our current membership is nine, making our quorum 5. Pamela W. asked what we thought about recruiting new members. Glenn Gabbard said he had looked at the state guidelines, and to be strong we need to recruit people with disabilities. Pamela W. thanked Glenn for his comments. Sarah Buck reminded us that Heidi said in her letter that she would be willing to help out with any questions about visual impairments. Sarah asked if we could recruit her for some things? She said she spoke with Brian at Fairhaven Pharmacy and he can do deliveries and that he is part of the disabled community. Pamela W. asked Eleanor Chew about how people are appointed. Eleanor explained that the individual needs to send a letter to the Select Board and that there is a form on their web page they can use. Cameron Durant said that the process after that is an interview with the SB and if appointed then they need to be sworn in by the town clerk. Pam W. said they had run an ad in the Neighborhood News in the past. She asked what we thought about saying we are looking for people with disabilities to serve. Sarah asked how many people in town are disabled. Pamela shared her screen with us showing national numbers as there are not numbers for Fairhaven specifically.

Cameron Durant introduced himself as our staff liaison while Pam was working to share her screen, sharing that he is the Human Resources Director for the town and is also the liaison for the Belonging Committee. Cameron said he is not a voting member and therefore does not count in our quorum. Eleanor welcomed Cameron. Pam asked if in looking for a more diverse board can we advertise on Face Book, the Neighborhood News, agencies in town serving the disabled community, Fairhaven Housing and Fairhaven Village. We need to reach out to them so they know they are a town resident. Glenn suggested that we reach out the religious communities as well. Cameron offered to work with the chair and vice-chair to ensure the wording and offered to send out the final release.

Eleanor made a motion to appoint and empower the chair, vice-chair and staff liaison to work out the logistics and timing of posting the openings in whatever outlets they deemed to be most appropriate. Glenn seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously. Cameron asked if there was funding available for postings in papers. Pam said we do have a budget.

IV. TOWN ACCESSIBILITY:

A. TOWN HALL: Pamela Whynot asked Sarah Buck and Eleanor Chew for an update. Eleanor responded that at the last meeting she asked Derek Frates if the cable on the floor could be moved and that within five minutes Derek was working on this. The cable has been moved and rerouted through the ceiling. There is a box on the floor that can't be moved but there is a rug over it and it is much better. She thanked Derek for his assistance with this. Sarah said she had no updates. Pam said she was curious about the fact we are addressing short-term items of accessibility and how do we address the mid- range and long-range items. She said accessibility is not the same as ease of access and a feeling of inclusion. She asked how we begin to address the longer-term needs, for example access into the building and the offices. Glenn Gabbard said that what is important is Universal Design and looking at designing public spaces for all whether they are disabled or have a stroller. We need to be open and welcoming to all. Glenn said he would like to see us do an accessibility study for the town as the Massachusetts Office of Disability (MOD) has grants but they require an audit as part of the application process. They award grants on an annual basis and the deadline is September 30th each year. He said some towns have done these and it creates a master list of every need and that he is looking at some agencies that do them. He asked if we should look at their audits offering to look into this. Pam W. said the TA was doing one for town hall only. Eleanor said the TA is redoing the one for town hall that was done by Joe Booth and the last full town one was done in 1997 by the Mass Municipal Association (MMA). Eleanor said we could reach out to them again but that we would need more than one bid by law. Pam said we should put this on the next agenda.

Sarah made a motion that we approve Glenn Gabbard to go out and gather information for us on Universal Access. Donna Maino Lavalley seconded this and the motion passed unanimously. Pam thanked Glenn for being forward thinking and said that anything we do in the future we can share with other committees. Cameron offered to look and see if there were other documents in town hall re: cost etc. and was told that the information we have was all that the SB had in their office.

B. PUBLIC SAFETY/ADOPT-A-STOP: Sarah Buck said she reached out to the fire chief and that he would like to come to the next meeting and she asked that the chief asked to be placed at the start of the meeting. She said the main reason she wanted him to come was to talk about how they would rescue someone with challenges. She asked us to bring questions for the chief. Sarah said she also spoke with him about the Adopt-A-Stop Program thinking it could be done with the hydrant clearing. As far as going building by building for the study she said many things need to be the same such as curb heights and markings so why can this not be done all at once. She suggested we do a contest with a prize where people could do a challenge to see how hard it is to get around for someone with a handicap.

C. PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE: Pamela Whynot explained the reason for this project. She said we do not have a clear plan for checking on stops to be sure they are cleared. Where do we go from here? What is our liability if we publicize this and someone is injured? How do we do this? How many stops do we do? Pam shared her screen with the SRTA graph of the stops in Fairhaven and usage by those with wheelchairs. Eleanor Chew said we have been talking about this for a really long time and we need to make some concrete decisions or say this is not something we can do right now. We need a concrete plan in writing for the next meeting. Donna Maino Lavalley said she was on the subcommittee and she agreed it is taking a while but it was necessary to get all the information we could to bring back. She said that some of the SRTA stops that we saw do their own plowing so we do not need to focus on them. Donna said she thinks it is important to proceed with this and they need to gather a bit more information and she doubted the clearing could be done along with the fire hydrants. There are issues for others, like students who use these stops in addition to those who are handicapped. Cameron said some are on state roads to which Pam replied that the state does not clear them. Cameron said he would work with the chair and with all the plans in place this could be done. He said he could reach out to other departments. Pamela asked

if we needed a clear plan. Sarah said she thought we should do the main roads first. Pam said SRTA's list was a year old and maybe we needed to get an updated document. Do we do top 10-12 stops or do we do all the stops? Sarah thought we should do the top 10 to start with feedback we can do more. Pam said their list is ordered by the number of wheelchair rides. Sarah asked if we could put this on right after the chief. Pam shared that she learned that all subcommittee meetings must be posted just like a regular meeting. Cameron said he thought we could have our cake and eat it to. Donna said that it will be done by someone and suggested we limit it to where volunteers can and will do a stop. It needs to be what can we take off, not on how many stops on the list but hopefully on how many people will do this. Donna asked about liability. Eleanor said this needs to go back to the subcommittee. Sarah agreed and asked if we could talk to the attorney. Eleanor said we need specific questions for the attorney and not just possibilities.

D. SPECIAL EDUCATION/ FAIRHAVEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS: There was no report as Jenna Benoit was not able to be here tonight.

E. HOUSING/NEWSLETTER: Pamela Whynot explained the reason for wanting to do the newsletter.

F. SOCIAL MEDIA: Pamela Whynot said the chair and vice-chair have access to post information. Do we need to do a motion to empower them or do we need a subcommittee to work on what gets posted and time frames? Cameron Durant said he also he can post. Pam asked if there were any thoughts or if she could get a motion or an agreement to post. Eleanor Chew moved that we empower the chair and vice-chair and staff liaison make decisions about postings. Sarah Buck asked if they could do it and if they have the time to do so and then she seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Cameron said the Belonging Committee has the same needs on Face Book postings. He said maybe looking at calendars, topics and when we should be posting things or however the board decides. Eleanor said we did this at a previous meeting giving the chair and vice-chair authority. Alyssa Botelho from Fairhaven Cable TV offered to do any graphics for us. Pam would like to present a calendar at the next meeting for us to approve as she wants everyone to be heard. She wants to speak with us and not for us. Cameron said he has a calendar that he can tweak and that he could be a sounding board. Eleanor reminded us that anyone can submit information for submission but that the chair and vice-chair can post.

G. HOMECOMING: Pamela Whynot said we need a subcommittee for this and confirmed that Sarah was willing to serve but not chair.

V. TREASURER'S REPORT: Glenn Gabbard, Treasurer, said we have \$1,000.00 for this fiscal year. Pamela Whynot asked if we need an agenda item to expend money. She asked this be an agenda item for the next meeting.

VI. NEW BUSINESS:

A. MASS COD UPDATE: Pamela Whynot said a representative of MASS COD will join us virtually for the January meeting to talk about best practices.

B. COMMISSION MEMBERS:

Pamela Whynot asked if there was anything we wanted to add to the next agenda. Eleanor Chew, Donna Maino Lavallo and Glenn Gabbard said they did not have anything. Sarah Buck asked us to put the fire department on the agenda first. Eleanor said she thought we should have the chief come at 5:30 due to the time we've actually been starting. Pamela said we need a specific Mission Statement and By-Laws and asked how we move forward with this.

VII. NEXT MEETING DATE: The next meeting was set for Thursday, January 10, 2022 at 5:00 p.m. Pamela Whynot thanked everyone for their attendance and participation and attendance.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT: Eleanor Chew moved that we adjourn with Donna Maino Lavelle seconding this. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Eleanor Chew
Secretary