

MINUTES

Mansfield Advisory Committee

on Persons with Disabilities

Regular Meeting - Tuesday March 24, 2009

2:30 PM - Conference Room B - Audrey P. Beck Building

I. Recording Attendance:

Present: K. Grunwald (staff), Armand “Chip” Perrier (guest), Paul Senk (guest), W. Gibbs (Chair), J. Sidney, C. Colon-Semenza, J. Blanshard.

Regrets: none.

II. Approval of Minutes: the minutes of the February 24, 2009 were accepted as written.

III. New Business (other added by majority vote)

a. Storrs Post Office- Guests: “Chip” Perrier and Paul Senk from the post office attended in response to concerns raised about accessibility to the Storrs and Mansfield Center post office buildings. They explained that Post Office Buildings do not come under the ADA, but are subject to the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA), which does not require automatic door openers. They explained that there was a lawsuit brought several years ago which required the Post Office to retro-fit leased facilities to improve accessibility. There are different requirements for leased vs. owned properties, and the building in Storrs is owned by the Post Office, but is on land that is leased. They have limited funding to make an improvement like this, and suggested that one option is to undertake local fund raising efforts. This is currently being done in Unionville, CT. They added that many post office buildings were built in the 40’s and 50’s, and they were not built with an eye towards accessibility issues. There are alternative means to improving access, and the use of a doorbell may be an option. There are also other means of obtaining postal services, including online access. They will visit both buildings in Mansfield to ensure that they are meeting ABA requirements and will report back to us on this. There are large post offices that do require automatic door openers based on size and volume of activity. The approximate cost of retrofitting with an automatic door is \$3000. The

court case that established guidelines for leased buildings is *Rose vs. U.S. Postal Service*. There was some discussion regarding possible fund raising efforts, including soliciting the Senior Center Association, Glen Ridge, Juniper Hill, and other groups that serve seniors. It was decided that once we receive information from them on the buildings the group will pursue fund-raising efforts.

b. **Whispering Glen Development:** The committee received plans for a new condominium development, which have been sent to John DeWolf for his review. J. Blanshard suggested that we should send the documents to Larry Frankel to review as well. A suggestion was made that the committee recommend that units be built with the option of it being finished as accessible units, including door width, counter height and bathroom access. K. Grunwald will draft a letter to be sent by W. Gibbs. This will first be sent to the entire committee for review.

c. **“Other”:** none.

IV. Old Business

a. **Follow-Up re: web page for this committee:** K. Grunwald has received an article from J. Sidney that will be added to the page that was written by a woman with MS. He will check with the Webmaster to make sure that the page is now live. Please send any items to be added to the page to webmaster@mansfieldct.org.

b. **Committee Goals for 2009:**

- 1) **Get the Web Page up and running.**
- 2) **Improve compliance with accessible parking spaces, and specify the amount of the fine on the signs.**
- 3) **Explore changing the local ordinance for violation of accessible parking regulations to increase the fine to the State amount. (K. Grunwald will clarify this issue with Sgt. Kodzis and will pursue requesting that the Town Council change the ordinance).**

4) Expand methods to promote the web page and the work of the committee including: Participation in Know Your Towns Fair and the Festival on the Green. K. Grunwald will send the article on the Committee to the Reminder, WAM Horizons, and Mansfield Today, Glen Ridge newsletter, Senior Sparks.

c. Status of other accessibility issues previously identified: K. Grunwald reported that Public Works removed the snow from the walkway. He also asked Building Official to review the concerns about access to the library. J. Sidney would like to know who to write a letter to about changes at the Community Center. K. Grunwald suggested that this be sent to the Town Council; cc. Curt Vincente.

Adjournment: meeting adjourned at 3:45 PM. Next meeting Tuesday, April 28 at 2:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin Grunwald