

BRAINTREE COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES
Fletcher Hall Meeting Room, Town Hall
1 John F. Kennedy Memorial Drive, Braintree MA
Monday, October 7, 2019, 6:30 p.m.

IN ATTENDANCE: Lynn Vaillancourt, Vice Chairman
Mary Russo, Member
Crystal Evans-Pradhan, Treasurer

NOT PRESENT: Robin Torpey, Secretary

ALSO PRESENT: Kristina Ziniti, ADA Coordinator
Marybeth McGrath, Director of ML & I

Call to Order:

Meeting was called to order by Vice Chairman Vaillancourt at 6:30 p.m.

Approval of Meeting Minutes:

The minutes of September 9, 2019 were reviewed.

Motion made by Crystal Evans-Pradhan to approve the meeting minutes of September 9, 2019. Motion seconded by Mary Russo. The motion passed by a 3-0-0 vote.

Introduction of Braintree Police Department Parking Enforcement Clerk:

Vice Chair Vaillancourt welcomed Deputy Chief Sean Lydon and Steve Salisbury, Parking Enforcement Clerk. Deputy Chief Lydon stated he is in charge of operations, which includes traffic and parking. They recently hired Mr. Salisbury as a parking enforcement clerk on July 1, 2019. Mr. Salisbury provided his business cards and stated that members can call him anytime. He stated he works 19 hours per week and can set his own hours, Monday through Friday. On a typical day he starts at town hall and he takes a video of all the vehicles in various sections of town. He stated this is a two hour route which is designed to help businesses so customers can pull up, do their business, and go. He stated on private property he can only enforce fire lanes and handicapped parking. Ms. Evans-Pradhan asked if he is allowed to enforce blocked curb cuts in shopping centers. Mr. Salisbury indicated he can.

Mr. Salisbury stated in three months he has issued 18 handicapped violations and 56 sidewalk violations. He stated he tries to use discretion and communicate with people, with the ultimate goal of voluntary compliance.

Ms. Evans-Pradhan stated that evenings and weekends are when they encounter the most violations.

Mr. Salisbury stated he sometimes works in the evening, but never on weekends. It is his understanding that the town is considering hiring a second person, who will be obligated to work Saturdays.

Vice Chairman Vaillancourt stated that decisions on new hires may be affected by the election of the new mayor. Mr. Salisbury stated he also conducts meet and greets where he will introduce himself to business owners and residents and he tries to main high visibility.

Closed Captioning Update:

Andrew Marron, from the Mayor's office, addressed the Commission. He stated they are in the process of working with Comcast and Verizon to renew their franchise agreements. They will be holding public meetings soon for residents to weigh-in. They will also be doing an memorandum of agreement with BCAM.

Mr. Marron stated in terms of closed captioning, that his part of the long-term vision, however, right now the town does not provide accesses to BCAM and BCAM is self-exempt under FCC regulations so they do not have to provide closed captioning. They feel that closed captioning could be a benefit to a lot of individuals in town, however, there may be ways to do it that are not as costly. They may be able to get systems that automatically generate captions, which may not be perfect but would be better than no captions. This is something they are pursuing, but it is still a ways out.

Vice Chair Vaillancourt asked how many franchise agreements the town is working on. Mr. Marron stated that there will just be Comcast and Verizon, as BELD will no longer offer cable as of December 1.

Ms. Evans-Pradhan stated that if they had closed captioning people would know what was going on when there are technical errors and there is no audio, such as with the recent candidate debates.

Mr. Marron announced the town recently signed a contract with a company called AudioEye, which monitors website compliance, such as color contrast ratios or larger fonts. They are constantly monitoring the town website and fix any issues on the spot. The schools have also been included in this contract so their website will also have the same service. He stated Braintree is one of the first municipalities in the area to do this.

Ms. Evans-Pradhan stated that the town of Lowell just implemented captioning and she can provide information on the company they use. She also stated that meeting agendas cannot be used with screen readers and should be scanned and uploaded in accessible format.

Mr. Marron stated as part of the process with the new Mayor coming in they are going to update all their collateral, part of this will include the use of accessible templates so all agendas will be consistent. He stated they had a training last May with the Perkins School for the Blind which was very informative.

Braintree Emergency Management Agency:

Bob Millett, Assistant Director, Braintree Emergency Management, addressed the Commission. He stated he has been receiving a lot of feedback in terms of how they interact and fit in with the Commission in terms of people with access and functional needs. He stated the way the overall system works, based on what FEMA wants, is a whole community approach. They try to include individuals as well as businesses in preparing for emergencies. He stated at his house in the case of emergency all he has to do is grab a bag and box. He has all his important paperwork, spare clothes, food, and water. He stated the way this is supposed to work based on FEMA is to have every last person have a three day supply of what they need at home. He reviewed informational documents with the Commission. He stated he is hoping the Commission can provide him with information to better understand what they should be preparing for in terms of individuals with need.

Vice Chair Vaillancourt stated the biggest thing she hears from patients in their home is when they have oxygen or oxygen concentrators they worry about the power going out. They always have extra tanks of oxygen but not necessarily enough for multiple days. She asked what to recommend to these patients.

Mr. Millett stated a lot of power outages can be anticipated, especially if a storm is coming, so they should schedule deliveries accordingly. At their homes, a generator is medically necessary and should be covered under their medical insurance.

Ms. Evans-Pradhan stated Medicare does not cover this expense. She is working with local legislators to try to get a medical billing code in place, because right now there is no billing code and they can be denied. She stated a lot of people do not register as using critical care equipment.

Vice Chairman Vaillancourt stated that the VNA notifies emergency agencies if they have individuals they care for in their home, however, the patient has the right to tell them not to do this. Many people with oxygen do not want their name brought up as being different and do not want to register. She stated another recommendation is that people purchase their own generator.

Mr. Millett stated when a patient says no that will fall on them individually. As a town they cannot provide an extra level of service if the patient does not want it.

Vice Chair Vaillancourt asked if Braintree keeps a certain number of generators to power the known addresses.

Mr. Millett stated they do have generators, which are typically used on an emergency basis only. If there were a wide scale power outage the shelters would have generators and they would not be looking to keep people at home. Hospitals in some cases do prefer that people who need a specialized level of care come to them.

Vice Chair Vaillancourt stated that when the VNA provides services and fill out an evaluation there is a portion that asks if emergency management has been informed. This would be used in the case where someone is truly housebound due to machines they are on. She asked if this information is acted on by BEMA.

Ms. McGrath stated she is unaware of any procedure that is setup to handle this information.

Ms. Evans-Pradhan stated Braintree has Smart 911 and if someone registers with that they can include all information for their household, and this has to be updated every six months.

Mr. Millett stated the BEMA is comprised of volunteers, with only two paid employees, one full-time and himself, who works 19 hours per week. In the case of actual emergencies it is the Fire and Police departments who respond. They have been continuously funded by a grant through Pilgrim nuclear power plant, which is closing, so their future funding is in question.

Project Updates:

Kristina Ziniti provided updates on ongoing projects.

Harris Playground/Perry Road - Ms. Ziniti provided information on the proposed playground equipment. There was a neighborhood meeting held over the summer and they are at the point where they are working on the layers of drainage because it has been such a problem. The playground equipment has been delivered to the contractor. The equipment is all inclusive.

Ms. McGrath stated she spoke with Nelson Chin from the Recreation Department and he indicated installation may begin as early as this week. They are hoping to have a ribbon cutting before Mayor Sullivan leaves.

Ms. Evans-Pradhan noted that one piece of equipment is the same as one at another playground and they had a lot of trouble with mulch getting into the equipment and preventing it from rocking. She expressed concern that this may have the same problem.

Ms. Ziniti stated she will bring this to Mr. Chin's attention.

WaterWheels Sign at Sunset Lake - Ms. Ziniti provided information from the WaterWheels website, as well as potential rules to be included on the metal sign. She has information about the sign company that DPW uses and she can talk to them once they agree on language for the sign. She stated the DPW Director recommended the sign be no larger than 36 x 36, and not to include too many lines or people will stop reading.

Ms. Evans-Pradhan stated that 18 x 24 would be reasonable.

The proposed language for the sign was reviewed.

Ms. McGrath stated the next step is to contact the chair company to see if their logo could be used on the sign. They would then contact the sign company and get a proposal to bring back to the Commission for their approval. Ms. McGrath stated she will also contact Recreation to see if they can continue using the banner sign before moving forward with creating a new sign.

South Braintree Square Benches - Ms. Ziniti stated the benches have been delivered but the DPW has been so busy they have not had an opportunity to install them. They stated this is on their list of things to do.

Finances - Ms. McGrath stated at the last meeting they discussed the expenditures and revenues for the Commission. She reviewed expenditures for fiscal 2018 and 2019, with total expenditures being \$5802.92. The handicapped ticket revenues that were brought into the town from July 1, 2018 to August 29, 2019 were \$4485.00. The total balance in that account as of August 29, 2019 is \$42,333.68. She stated in fiscal 2016 and fiscal 2017 the Commission provided a formal recommendation for approving expenditures from the account for the ADA coordinator's salary. In fiscal 2018 and fiscal 2019 the administration thought that this recommended approval was also received, so they moved the money from the account into the operating budget. She then notified them that this approval was not in place and the money was transferred back into the account, for a total of \$43,472.00.

Ms. Evans-Pradhan stated she met with someone in the Treasurer's office who handles all the parking fines to determine the reason for the drop in revenue. This individual felt this is probably due to the loss of the police officer who was handling enforcement. She asked if there is a way of identifying which other officers are enforcing for the purpose of increasing revenue.

Vice Chairman Vaillancourt recommended not looking back, but moving forward with the new enforcement officer and monitoring it from here.

All members were in agreement with this approach.

Announcements/Information:

Massachusetts Office on Disabilities Planning Grant: Ms. Ziniti stated the grant deadline was extended to October 8, 2019. They hosted a training which she attended and they wanted to give people the opportunity to get something together so provided a deadline extension. They should be notified in December if they have been chosen for a grant. She was told not to be discouraged if they do not get one, as other towns have had to apply multiple times before finally being selected.

Ms. Evans-Pradhan stated she spoke with Jim Casey, the Town Clerk, who is going to have the Automark machines out in preparation for the election on October 22. She

recommended they advertise this so people with disabilities can come and learn how to use the machines prior to the election.

Ms. McGrath stated she will speak with Jim Casey about getting this information.

Ms. McGrath announced that the Town Solicitor has rendered the legal opinion that the equipment carriers for fire apparatus to transport equipment such as wheelchairs will not be permitted, as transport of individual personal items would be a liability.

Next Meeting Date:

Monday, November 4, 2019

Motion by Crystal Evans-Pradhan to adjourn the Commission on Disabilities meeting at 7:53 p.m. Motion seconded by Mary Russo. Unanimously voted.