

SCPD – Goals of the Commission
January 31, 2023

SOMERVILLE COMMISSION ON DISABILITY GOALS

1. INSURE MUNICIPAL SERVICES, PROGRAMS, MEETINGS AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES ARE AVAILABLE AND ACCESSIBLE TO PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES.

- Meet with appropriate staff: the Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator, Select Board, Mayor, City/Town Manager, Planning Staff, Building Inspector, and Department of Public Works to review regulations, priorities, make a plan and set timelines.
 - Survey all municipal buildings, facilities, and sidewalks for access.
 - Assess each service, program and activity for physical and communication accessibility and to make sure policies are not discriminatory.
 - Review grievance procedures and notification of rights.
 - Prioritize what needs to be done (especially the expensive building renovations).
 - Be aware of new programs, services or construction. Work with those involved to make sure they meet the needs of people with disabilities; e.g. be a member of the school building committee.
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- All public meetings should be held in accessible locations.
 - Emergency services, such as police and fire departments, should have telecommunication devices for people who are deaf (TTY's are devices which enable persons who are deaf to communicate by telephone).
 - Written material, such as town reports and newsletters, should be available on tape and in Braille upon request for people who are visually impaired.
 - Announcements about municipal activities, such as recreational programs, meetings, public health programs, and employment opportunities, should be publicized on the radio, cable TV, as well as in print.
 - Sign language interpreters should be available at meetings and activities upon request.
 - Libraries should have books on tape and in large print plus mail or home delivery for people who are shut-in.

2. INSURE BUSINESSES, AGENCIES, AND ORGANIZATIONS ARE ACCESSIBLE TO PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES.

- Survey businesses, agencies and organizations for communication and architectural access. Work with owners and managers to encourage compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Architectural Access Board's regulations and other disability laws.
- Educate owners and managers about the needs of persons with mobility, hearing, visual, cognitive and other disabilities.
- Introduce them to federal IRS \$15,000 tax deduction for barrier removal and \$5,000 tax credit for ADA compliance.

3. ENCOURAGE MOBILITY

- Survey all parking lots that are open to the public for HP designated spaces. Work with owners and the building inspector to bring the lots into compliance with AAB and ADA regulations and municipal by-laws.
 - Review on-street HP designated parking and curb cuts. Work with local officials to increase both if necessary.
 - Propose an ordinance/by-law that allow police to ticket cars on privately owned, publicly used parking lots and that increases fines for violations of HP parking.
 - Evaluate transportation needs. Work with Regional Transit Authority, Council on Aging, municipal officials to increase (or to provide!) accessible transportation.
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- Offer a program that gives discounts on taxi rides.
 - Contract with a local van company to provide rides.
 - Council on Aging and other transportation providers must also provide accessible transportation.

4. INCREASE ACCESSIBLE AFFORDABLE HOUSING.

- Work with housing authority to increase adaptable and accessible housing.
- Meet with local builders/developers to encourage development of accessible and adaptable housing.

5. ALL STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES SHOULD RECEIVE AN EDUCATION COMPARABLE TO THAT GIVEN TO NON-DISABLED STUDENTS IN THE LEAST RESTRICTIVE, MOST INTEGRATED SETTING.

- Evaluate programs for students with disabilities for mainstreaming and integration.
- Evaluate schools for architectural accessibility.
- Introduce a disability awareness program in the schools.

6. BE A RESOURCE: PROVIDE INFORMATION AND REFERRALS ON A BROAD RANGE OF DISABILITY ISSUES.

- Advertise the Commissions existence. Post the community with flyers or brochures, put articles in the newspaper, us cable TV and radio.
- Establish a way for people to contact the Commission. Either set-up an office and phone answering machine or assign one commission member to be the contact person.
- Develop a file of information.

7. WORK TO PASS FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION WHICH WILL INCREASE THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (LOBBY).

- Write, call, meet with legislators.
- Testify at public hearings.

8. ADVOCATE FOR THE RIGHTS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES AND DISABILITY GROUPS.

•Set up and publicize a mechanism for people to contact the commission with their individual concerns.

- Work with appropriate officials and organizations to resolve situations.
- Work with the Massachusetts Office on Disability Client Services Program.

9. EDUCATE THE PUBLIC ABOUT DISABILITY ISSUES.

- Develop good relationships with newspapers, TV and radio stations (start a column or regular show, write press releases about your work).
- Initiate awareness program in the schools.
- Speak to civic organizations such as Lions, Girl Scouts, Chamber of Commerce, and Rotary.
- Hold disability awareness workshops.

10. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS.

- Determine how many people in your community have a disability (Massachusetts census figures indicate 17% of the population as having a disability; that percentage might be higher if you have a large elderly population).
- Find out what peoples needs are. Conduct a needs survey or hold a public hearing.
- Contact organizations in your community with similar concerns, veteran’s office, council on aging, special needs parents advisory committee. Work together on common issues.
- Establish an advisory committee, friends of the commission or associate membership to increase support.
- Get organized. Adopt operating procedures, establish long and short-range goals, break into subcommittees or assign tasks to individuals to be accomplished between meetings.