

# FAIRHAVEN COMMISSION ON DISABILITY

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Meeting Minutes August 17, 2023

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

Contact: [cod@fairhaven-ma.gov](mailto:cod@fairhaven-ma.gov)

Present: Town Hall: Marcus Ferro (chair), Pamela Whynot (vice-chair), Eleanor Chew(secretary), Glenn Gabbard (treasurer), Ronnie Medina and Annemarie Chagnon  
Cameron Durant (staff liaison), Keith Silvia (Select Board Representative)

ZOOM: Martha Reed- New Staff Liaison

Absent: Donna Maino Lavalle

Guests: Fairhaven Cable TV. Cara Viveiros and Nikia Gonsalves

**I. CALL TO ORDER:** Marcus Ferro, chair, read the meeting call to order and the state guidelines and chair, Marcus Ferro called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Ronnie made a motion to accept the minutes and Pam seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**III. MEMBERSHIP:** Marcus thanked Cameron Durant who has been our staff liaison for his service and support saying he made this commission possible. Marcus also acknowledged the extra time Cam committed to our commission. Marcus introduced Martha Reed as our new staff liaison, thanking her for joining us, saying he looked forward to working with her. Martha introduced herself and presented the idea of our meeting at the COA office instead of town hall. Marcus shared that Cara Viveiros was observing as she was considering joining the commission.

## IV. TOWN ACCESSIBILITY:

**A. Town Hall:** Eleanor asked if this could be taken off of the agenda to which Marcus agreed

**B. Public Safety:** Marcus said he met with Lt. Kobza about ideas for accessibility. He explained the new Blue Envelope Program saying the packets were available at the police station, along with the autism seat belt covers. The police department also has the Known To Wander forms that can be filled out as well. Annemarie said the Route 6 crosswalk signal by the cannons is not working and said she has called the BPW about this. Glenn said there is funding pending in the state for the Blue Envelope program.

**C. Infrastructure:** Marcus said that Annemarie had touched on one issue and asked if there were any more issues or concerns. There were none expressed.

**D. Town Beach:** Marcus said the commission's work last year on the beach chair and mat was highlighted on WPRI TV. He shared that one person has said they could now use the beach due to the availability of these items and that we are getting a second chair from the SMILE Group. Marcus has put in a request to the BPW regarding the boardwalk, noting the CPC funding process will begin in the fall. Vinnie Furtado, BP Superintendent, has offered to help with this. Once we go to the CPC we will need to go to the Conservation Commission and

that we will need drawings to present to them. Marcus expressed the need for designated HP parking at the town beach. Marcus asked if this was an ADA requirement now or if it applied only when improvements are done. Glenn said with the huge parking lot we could designate HP spaces and that there are sharp edges at the end of the ramp. Eleanor felt that fixing the issues with the ramp would resolve this. Pam said the cost of the sticker is cost prohibitive for some people asking if we can make it more affordable for people with a need, asking if we could buy some permits for people with our budget.

**E. Special Education/ Fairhaven Public Schools:** Marcus said he sent an email to Tara Kohler, Colin Veitch and Brian Monroe about the parking issues around the high school.

**F. Housing:** We can take this off of the agenda

**G. Social Media:** Glenn now has access to post information on Face Book. We have 181 followers with 27 new followers this month. Marcus encouraged people to like us and to share our page to their page. Glenn said he's noticed more cross sharing amongst committees,

**H. Mission Statement/By-Laws:** Eleanor said the Mission Statement is posted on the town's website. She offered to take the lead on writing the by-laws and the group accepted this offer.

**5. TREASURER'S REPORT/BUDGET:** Glenn reminded us that we had \$1,000.00 in our budget for this year. With the purchase of the banner we now have a little more than \$900.00 left. Marcus thanked Martha for picking up the banner and for the coupon she had for this. He thanked Cameron for printing the flyers.

## **VI. NEW BUSINESS:**

**A. Grant Program:** Pam shared that she, Glenn and Eleanor had met with Evan George from MA. COD to talk about the grant program via ZOOM. Pam said she wanted to reconsider the decision they had made to not pursue the grant this year. She explained that step one is a self-evaluation of the town's needs and step two would allow us to work on the needs identified in step one, saying there are numerous people who can do the RFP. Pam said she emailed Angie Lopes-Ellison and Paul from the Planning Department. Pam said we meet the criteria and the application is due September 15, 2023. Eleanor asked Keith if we need Select Board approval to apply with Cameron responding no. Glenn said that with the grant approval the ADA Co-ordinator would need to work on this and not the COD. Cameron asked if we would need a matching grant saying we would need consistency over time once the funding is sent in. Glenn said that if approved the work would be done in 2024, with us needing to secure a consultant between now and December, 2023. Annemarie asked if we fill it out now would the work start in July 2024. Cameron mentioned the study done on town hall by Joe Booth. Glenn said we could focus on specific parts of that, saying we would need to meet with him to complement that study and not to compete with it. Eleanor agreed with Glenn that we needed to do it well and that it not be thrown together. Pam explained why she changed her view from her original no and that the funding can be up to \$250,00.00 and she had looked at 30 other towns that had done this. Annemarie asked if this would be held against us if we didn't get it,

with Marcus saying no. Martha suggested that we take a vote to do the research over the next couple of weeks. Marcus asks who looks at the scope of the work with Glenn responding they will do what we ask them to do. Marcus said if we can do a broad study then why not do so? Eleanor moved that we set up a working committee to explore the potential of applying for a grant from MA COD, with Glenn seconding it. The motion passed unanimously. Eleanor moved that we appoint Pam Whynot, Marcus Ferro and Annemarie Chagnon as the working committee with Glenn seconding it. The motion passed unanimously. Martha offered to assist with this as well.

**B. Disability Pride Event with the Belonging Committee:** Marcus started by saying this was a great event and Glenn asked what we would do differently next year. Marcus said eh liked having the COD there and Eleanor said she would like to see us more involved from the beginning with the planning. Annemarie suggested that next year the location of the music be looked at as it was very loud as people came out the door and that it might have been too much for some people to walk into.

**C. Snow Removal:** Pam said there was nothing new.

**D. Emergency Preparedness Webinar:** This can be removed from the agenda

**E. MA. COD Statewide Meetings:** Eleanor said she and Annemarie had participated in the state wide meeting and that Annemarie spoke about Fairhaven when we had a chance to share. Eleanor said she did a great job representing us. Eleanor encouraged other members to join in the MA. COD trainings and meetings as they are well done and informative.

**F. Fees from Parking Fines:** Eleanor spoke about this from the state meeting. Marcus asked where the money from parking fines goes now, with Cameron responding it goes to the General Fund. Annemarie said our fine for a HP parking violation is \$100.00 which is the lowest it can be and that other cities and towns have increased it to \$300.00 as a deterrent to illegal parking. Glenn said at one time some commission's provided the enforcement. Marcus said he wanted to keep our focus positive, noting this would remove the responsibility from the police department. Glenn moved that Eleanor take charge of exploring parking for the COD, with Ronnie seconding it. It passed unanimously.

**G. Report from State COD Meeting:** Glenn said Eleanor covered this earlier. He shared that meetings are not record meetings due to confidentiality concerns.

**H. Student Intern:** Eleanor shared how at the state meeting some towns shared they had a student intern from the high school who participated in their meetings as a non-voting member to give perspectives from a younger perspective.

## **VII. OLD BUSINESS:**

**A. Meetings with Department Heads:** Eleanor is continuing to schedule meetings with department heads and is going to schedule one with Tara Kohler from the School Department for September. Glenn spoke about the physical access of the library and that they had a first edition copy of Helen Keller's book as Henry Huttleston Rogers financed her education.

**VIII. Public Comments:** Marcus invited Cara to join us on the commission.

**IX. New Meeting Date:** Eleanor moved that we meet Thursday, September 14 at 6:00 p.m. at town hall with Ronnie seconding it. The motion passed unanimously.

**VIII. Closing Comments/Adjournment:** Pam made a motion that we adjourn at 7:09 p.m. with Glenn seconding it. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Eleanor Chew  
Secretary