



TOWN OF WAKEFIELD

COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES

NOTICE OF MEETING

February 6th, 2023 | 7:00 p.m.

Via Zoom: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83008858320?pwd=cmo5eGdRODhxK1VQeIFQSW05RUtrUT09>

Consistent with the Governor's orders extending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law every effort will be made to allow the public to view and/or listen to the meeting in real time. If you do not have a camera or microphone on your computer you may use the following dial in number: 1-301-715-8592 Meeting ID 898 4167 8891 Passcode 348433. Please only use dial in or computer and not both as feedback will distort the meeting. This meeting will be audio and video recorded. In compliance with the Americans with Disability Act, this location is accessible to people with disabilities, Wakefield provides reasonable accommodations and/or language assistance free of charge upon request. If you are a person with a disability and require information or materials in an alternate format, or if you require any other accommodation, please contact the Town's Disability Coordinator, William Renault-Town Engineer at 781-246-6308 as far in advance of the event as possible. Every effort will be made to grant your request. Advance notification will enable the Town to make reasonable arrangements to remove an accessibility barrier for you.

Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 7:01 pm.

Members in attendance:

Marie Rej, Lois Benjamin, Paula Thompson, Katharine Staiti, Judy Tanner, Janice Mirabassi, Kristen Bardol; Members not in attendance: Lorna Davidson-Connelly, Levonne Coughlin; Guests: Bill Renault; Councilor Michael McLane; Meghan, a disability community advocate from Melrose

Pledge of Allegiance

Reading of the Commission's Mission Statement

Approval of Minutes from January 9, 2023

Motion to approve; seconded; all in favor.

Old/New Business

- Presentation by Gregg Adams, MA Rehab Commission (MRC), Malden Office
 - Gregg Adams introduced himself as a Job Placement Specialist for the geographical area that includes Wakefield. Each MRC office has a Job Placement Specialist.
 - Additionally, there are 10-15 counselors in each MRC area office across the state.
 - A person with a disability can be referred to MRC or the individual can self-refer to receive services. The aim of MRC is to help individuals gain independence.
 - Services begin with an initial assessment.
 - Barriers to getting work are discussed – e.g., training, transportation, etc.
 - When the individual consumer is “job ready”, with training complete, the MRC Job Placement Specialist conducts outreach to potential employers.



- MRC has pre-cultivated relationships with employers in the region. MRC will help the job-seeking consumer with their resume and with mock interviews.
- MRC has accounts with employers such as CVS, MGH Brigham, Home Depot, Market Basket, and many other employers. MRC assesses the employer's personnel needs to create an appropriate plan. E.g., when they needed pharm techs at CVS, MRC created an in-house training program in coordination with CVS.
- MRC works with the Human Resource Departments (HRD) in all state agencies. MRC's consumers have the opportunity to make a 4-minute job pitch in front of the group of HRD representatives. There is also a program to help individuals with disabilities obtain federal jobs.
- MRC has an on-the-job evaluation program. MRC pays the salary of the consumer/employee for the first 6 weeks; at the end of this start-up period the consumer may be offered a job or a positive job recommendation to add to their resume. This MRC involvement is a big "plus" when outreaching to potential employers. Employers can also earn tax credits.
- Some jobs may be worked remotely, which is helpful to some consumers who are more comfortable without in-person interaction.
- Once an individual is hired, MRC will work with the employer and support the consumer for 90 days. MRC will educate the employer about the ADA and making accommodations for the employee.
- The hope is to make the best match possible between the consumer and the employer that will lead to a career for the consumer.
- MRC begins serving consumers who are high-school age (16-17). They have placed consumers in employment who are age 80 – or even older.
- Questions?
 1. Does MRC market to local businesses? A: Yes, we send out our brochures to many local employers. And we are happy to network with Chambers of Commerce.
 2. How are referrals made to MRC? A: There is a counselor connected to every school system.
 3. How do you partner with the Dept of Developmental Services (DDS)? A: MRC works with the DDS vendors, such as VinFen and Easter Seals, to help consumers who need additional assistance. MRC is co-located with the Dept of Transitional Assistance (DTA) and works closely with DDS.
 4. What is an MRC counselor's typical caseload? Counselors have about 150 consumers in their caseload.
 5. Can someone call their MRC Office to ask for a referral to receive services? A: MRC has monthly info sessions, or you can go to mass.gov/MRC or you can contact the office that serves your town and set something up.
 6. Note: MRC does not directly serve individuals who are blind or have low vision – they will be referred to the Mass Commission for the Blind which has similar services as MRC but specializes in the specific accommodations and training that a blind person might need.

- Marie Rej: Our Commission will reach out to our local Chamber of Commerce to provide them with the MRC brochure. We will also put the MRC brochure on our website and the town Facebook page, and send to the town HR representative at Town Hall.
- Gregg encouraged us to reach out to him anytime!
- Jen McDonald asked that we make a plan to send things to her intermittently. Many Commission members were sending things at varied times, and it was becoming difficult to track. Janice M. will be the point of contact moving forward.
- What types of information do we have on our website and Resource List?
 - Disability-related information
 - MRC info
 - Meeting notices
 - Social posts (upcoming events and opportunities) – should be accompanied by no more than 3 sentences explaining the event and a hyperlink to the event website and/or registration
 - Website Resources – these items are more static and long-term
- Bill Renault is working on plans for the March meeting with the folks who are working on the NE Metro Tech project. He will forward an invitation to folks in other towns who work in similar capacities. Bill will draft an email to send out.
 - Commission members should think of specific questions/concerns related to disability issues that we want to raise at the meeting. E.g.:
 1. The extremely long ramp (735 feet long with an 8% grade) from the lower parking lot is impractical. How can that be addressed?
 2. How many spaces in the upper parking lot have been assigned as accessible spaces? Does this JUST meet the minimum number of spaces, or does it take into account the percentage of students with disabilities who may enroll at the school? Or staff? Parents/visitors?
 3. Is the grade of the entrance road too steep for a sidewalk? Is there such a thing as “too steep for a sidewalk”? (If so, how do sidewalks exist on natural inclines, such as Prospect Street?)
 - A disability community advocate from Melrose informed us of an upcoming NEMT School Committee meeting (in-person) at 100 Hemlock Road in the Library. One entrance has an elevator. There will be time for public comment.
 - The next Wakefield ZBA meeting following our meeting is scheduled for March 8th.

Wrap-up: Next Meeting is Monday, March 6, 2023 at 7:00 pm

Motion to Adjourn: 8:08 pm

Motion made; seconded; all in favor.

Respectfully Submitted by Marie Rej and Lorna J. Davidson-Connelly, Co-Chairs