



TOWN OF WAKEFIELD

COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES

NOTICE OF MEETING

March 13th, 2023 | 7:00 p.m.

Via Zoom: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89083315315?pwd=bUx3TWhXNUhEWDR4dVFobUk4VS9Sdz09>

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 890 8331 5315 Passcode 916248. 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.

Meeting Agenda - *SPECIAL MEETING*

Call to Order: 7:02 pm

Present:

Commission members: Marie Rej, Paula Thompson, Lorna Davidson-Connelly, Katharine Staiti, Judy Tanner, Lois Benjamin, Janice Mirabassi. Absent: Levonne Coughlin; Kristin Bardol

Additional public participants from some of the 12 towns that are part of the NE MetroTech district. Note: the audiotaped version of the meeting provides more details on these participants as they made contributions to the conversation.

Pledge Allegiance

Reading of the Commission's Mission Statement – "Our mission is to address the needs and concerns of our disabled residents and provide their full participation in the activities and services of Wakefield."

Old/New Business

- Motion: Approval of minutes from February 6, 2023 meeting. Seconded. Approved.
- No changes to Commission finances at this time.
- Main topic of this meeting: Move forward any concerns that the Commission has [about the proposed VokeTech school building and grounds] to the ZBA and relay any safety concerns to the police and/or fire departments.
- Information from a public participant:



- The MA Architectural Access Board (AAB) has not received any requests for variances under 521 CMR on the Voke project as late as last week; we do not know if they are going to make any such requests. In January, 2023 the project listed “Disability Variance” as a line item on the project. Note: the AAB can evaluate a variance at any point in the project.
- Marie will discuss this with Bill Renault.
- Participant Q: A comment was made during the last meeting that there would be a follow-up meeting scheduled to discuss safety issues. Is that correct?
- Marie: If we have safety concerns, we will put this in the ZBA letter and ask that those questions be directed to the Wakefield PD.
- There are safety issues for everyone when using the proposed ramp, especially in the winter time.
- The presenters mentioned getting specific equipment to keep the ramp clear of snow and properly treated to help prevent slippage. Environmentalists are concerned about the chemicals that will be used in this process.
- Keep in mind that most students will arrive by bus, so using the ramp may not be an issue for some people. We can look forward to a new building that has elevators – unlike the current building – as well as an accessible preschool on the grounds.
- Q: Will cars need to display a specific disability placard? Would the school work individually with a student to determine if an upper parking lot space is needed/warranted for specific circumstances – e.g., a student who has asthma who cannot do the long walk up the ramp on very cold days?
- Q: Do we have any idea how many faculty/staff members will be using the accessible spaces in the upper parking lots – i.e., how many remaining spaces are there for visitors and/or students in need of accessible parking?
- Q: Is the school planning to provide evacuation chairs in appropriate locations to assist with emergency evacuation?
- **Suggested recommendations/language for the ZBA letter:**
 - In addition to the 22 planned accessible parking spaces, have an additional 5 spaces “at the ready” should the need arise. This could be similar to the voting day at the Galvin where accessible “swing spaces” were added for elders. We can ask the 11 other communities served by the Voke to support this idea. If it is determined that the number of currently-planned accessible parking spaces is inadequate, and a need is identified, the school should be prepared to increase the number of accessible spaces.
 - The proposed ‘walk through the woods’ on the ramp may provide the opportunity for abuse to occur – a risk that is higher for people with disabilities. While vocational education could be wonderful for students with disabilities, the ramp could be a safety hazard in many ways.
 - Arrange for shuttle services between the upper/lower parking lots during inclement months – e.g., December > March.

- Bring these ideas to the Disability Advisory Board that is currently organized to provide advice on this project.
- Inquire if that Board is going to continue in any format after the school opens – and recommend that it does continue.
- Inquire about call boxes, lighting, and monitoring cameras to be included on/near the ramp. (These topics could go to the safety committee.)
- Create “off ramps” at the openings where a person could go if they need to get off the ramps.
- If a person using the ramp needs a rest, build in a bench at the resting spots.
- Inquire about getting a golf cart to assist as may be needed in going to/from the upper lot.
- Ask the DAB if we can have open side spaces on the ramp that do not have continuous railings.
- Ask about the grade of the sidewalks – they cannot exceed 5%.
- Motion: To accept the Commission on Disability recommendations/language as written. Seconded. So moved.
- Motion: To allow Marie Rej to work with Bill Renault to draft a letter with these recommendations for the ZBA and the Safety Committee. Seconded. So moved.
- Public participants:
 - If the Voke’s Disability Advisory Board is still meeting, recommend that a member of WCoD be part of that group.
 - Recommend dark-skies-compliant lighting.
 - We have concerns that the Voke’s Disability Advisory Board is ad-hoc; find out if it will be on-going.
 - How will the WCoD follow up on these concerns?
 - We will rely on the groups that have regulatory authority to assure that follow-through occurs. The WCoD is an advisory group – not a regulatory group.
 - Ask the planner to show us an 8.3% grade ramp. That grade, plus the proposed length of 1100 feet, will take a person about 12 minutes to ascend.
- **Other business:** WCoD members should all have received an invitation to the Town Board Appreciation event on March 27, 2023, 5:45 – 6:45pm, for all volunteers serving on town boards.

Next Meeting: April 3, 2023

Motion to Adjourn: 9:17 pm

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