

**COMMISSION ON ACCESSIBILITY  
MONDAY, JUNE 28, 2022, 1:30 PM  
MINUTES**

Chairman Robert Fleischer called the meeting to order at 1:30 PM at the Groton Center

Members present: Bob Fleischer, Judy Anderson, Lynne Pistorino, Tom Pistorino, and Alan Taylor

Others present: ADA Coordinator Michelle Collette, Select Board Member and COA Van Driver Peter Cunningham, ZBA Chair Bruce Easom, COA Outreach Coordinator Nickole Boardman, Deputy Fire Chief Art Cheeks, GRG Condominium Association Chair Catherine Stepinski, GRG Resident Patricia Stepinski

**MINUTES**

The motion was made by Anderson, seconded by Taylor, to approve the minutes of May 16, 2022. The motion passed unanimously.

**COMPLAINT FROM PATRICIA KAROHL, 515A MAIN STREET**

The Commission received a letter dated June 9, 2022 from Patricia Karohl, resident at Groton Residential Gardens (GRG), regarding difficulty accessing her first-floor unit at 515A Main Street. The existing asphalt berm between the parking lot and walkway to the front door of the building is a barrier for Ms. Karohl who uses a walker. She requested that the berm be removed when the parking lot is repaved. The repaving is scheduled to begin soon. Ms. Karohl was not present at the meeting.

Select Board member and COA van driver Peter Cunningham described witnessing the difficulty Ms. Karohl had getting over the berm to access the sidewalk to her building when she took the COA van. He suggested that she contact the ADA Coordinator and the Commission on Accessibility. She requested that the berm not be replaced when the parking lot is paved as described in her letter dated June 9, 2022.

GRG Condominium Chair Catherine Stepinski read a letter describing how upset she was after she was approached by ADA Coordinator Michelle Collette and Mr. Cunningham when they were doing a site walk at the property. She stated that there are many frustrations related to the Condominium Association including lack of participation. Catherine Stepinski's mother, Patricia Stepinski, said her daughter was very upset after the site walk and noted that such improvements are very costly to the unit owners.

Member Anderson asked if the request to remove the berm affects one building or many buildings. Mr. Cunningham said some buildings have curb cuts and ramps and others do not. *(Note: GRG contains 44 units in 11 buildings.)*

Chairman Fleischer asked if the Commission should request a legal opinion on the matter. The Commission members said not at this time.

Member Tom Pistorino asked what the cost would be to eliminate the berm at 515 Main Street building. The cost to make the change was unknown at this time.

Member Anderson asked for the Deputy Fire Chief's opinion. Deputy Chief Cheeks said the Fire Department has multiple ways to access the buildings in an emergency.

Chairman Fleischer said this is an opportunity to help one of its residents when they did the new paving. Catherine Stepinski said they would have to gather more information about costs and consult with the Condominium Association.

The motion was made by Anderson, to send a letter to the GRG Condominium Association to recommend that the Groton Residential Gardens Condominium Association take appropriate measures to remove the asphalt berm at 515 Main Street and construct a new curb cut and walkway to provide universal access to the building.

Tom Pistorino had questions about voting on the motion without knowing the cost. Member Anderson said the decision should not be made based upon the cost because the requested accommodation should be made.

Tom Pistorino seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

### **FIRE DEPARTMENT LOCK BOXES**

The Commission met with Deputy Fire Chief Cheeks to discuss a program to install lock boxes that would contain a key to provide access to a house in case of an emergency. The program would be voluntary.

Deputy Chief Cheeks explained the "Safe Program" assesses fire protection in senior residents' homes for items such as smoke detectors and CO<sup>2</sup> detectors. However, the cost of lock boxes is not included in the Safe Program so residents would have to pay for the boxes. The cost of the box is approximately \$170 plus shipping. He also expressed a strong preference for boxes with access by keys rather than codes for ease of access and security reasons. Only the Fire Department would have the master key.

The Commission discussed working with other organizations to prepare a survey to find out if residents would be interested in participating in such a program. The survey could be distributed with the Groton Electric Light Department monthly bills.

Member Anderson asked if there are funding sources to help people pay for the lock boxes. Deputy Chief Cheeks said he would reach out Rachel Bialecki who is a Commissioner of Trust Funds.

### **SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCIES**

The Commission met with the new Outreach Coordinator, Nickole Boardman, discussed working with the COA to prepare a list of social service agencies and other support services. The list would include contact information. The Friends of the Groton Elders is working on a similar project. Ms. Boardman said there is a need for such information resources for seniors

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and that no one who needs services should be turned away. Ms. Collette said Housing Coordinator Fran Stanley is a good resource as well.

**NEXT MEETING**

The Commission will meet on Monday, September 12, 2022, at 1 PM unless there is a need to meet sooner.

Meeting adjourned at 3:00 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Collette  
ADA Coordinator