



City of Fall River Massachusetts

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COMMISSION ON DISABILITY 2021 MAR 22 P 5:06

PAUL E. COOGAN
Mayor

CITY CLERK
FALL RIVER, MA

Dennis Polselli
Chairman

Debbie Pacheco
Vice-Chairwoman

**Minutes of the Fall River Commission on Disability
Conference Call Meeting
Wednesday, February 10, 2021
2:00 PM**

Chairman Dennis Polselli called the meeting to order at 2:05pm

1. Chairman Dennis Polselli opened the meeting by reading the Open Meeting Law statement.
2. **Members Present:** Chairman Dennis Polselli; Vice Chairwoman Debbie Pacheco; Commissioner Daniel Robillard; Commissioner Lisa Silva; Commissioner Ann O'Neil-Sousa

Others Present: Catherine Destremps, Health Department Clerk; Phil Viall, Executive Director from the SHARE Foundation; Beverly Thorn, Representative from the SHARE Foundation

Members Absent: Attorney Gary Howayeck ESQ, ADA Coordinator

3. **Public Input:** No public input
4. **Approval of the minutes for the meeting of Wednesday, January 13, 2021**

Motion: Commissioner Daniel Robillard
Second: Vice Chairwoman Debbie Pacheco
All in favor; none opposed; abstentions: 0

5. Guest Presenters: Representative Valery Thorn and Executive Director, Phil Viall from the SHARE Foundation

Executive Director, Phil Viall from the SHARE Foundation started off by explaining that SHARE is an acronym for Society of Human Advancement through Rehabilitation Engineering Foundation. They are a 501(c)(3) non-profit foundation that was officially formed in 1982.

In the summer of 1981, Les Cory & Philip Vaill worked with Linda Texceira from Little Compton who had severe cerebral palsy. Linda was in a wheelchair and could not speak. She could only communicate with her family through an eye board which is a plexiglass board with the alphabet printed on it. Linda would gaze at a letter while another person would speak the letter so she could spell words. Unfortunately, someone always needed to be with her in order to communicate with someone.

Les and Philip had the idea that some sort of a micro-computer system could maybe help Linda to communicate independently. It was determined that Linda could pretty reliably control the motion of her head. A switch was placed beside her head and then behind her head. The one common question asked was: How can you communicate with one switch? One way for example is Morse code.

They are able to multiply the speed of the micro-computer a little bit, create software and add a scanner mechanism (kind of like Linda's eye board). Linda would click the switch to light up a column and click by clicking again would be able to pick a letter. This allowed her to create words and messages. Over the years, other things were added to make her life easier.

Commissioner Daniel Robillard made a motion to wave the rules to give as much time as they need to have a coherent presentation.

Second: Vice Chairwoman Debbie Pacheco

All in favor; none opposed; abstentions: 0

Beverly Thorn, Representative from the SHARE Foundation, gave us a few more examples of people that the foundation has helped.

Sergio, who lived out the community, had an episode were he became quadriplegic and mute. They were able to provide him with a laptop he could control with his thumb. The laptop has special software that allows him to create speech, email, create documents and access Netflix movies.

Sylvia was a woman who was quadriplegic due to multiple sclerosis. She could speak but was only able to move one finger. They were able to make software where she was able to use Alexa and access books to read.

Daniel Robillard asked what the average cost of an average system would be. Phil explained that the average system, in terms of software, would cost \$1,000.00 to \$2,500.00 if they were to purchase new. They do their best to use recycled computers, whenever possible. In past years, they have had various organizations (including banks) donate left-over computers. This works well with laptops and desktops. These days, the recycled computers are getting scarce.

Commissioner Daniel Robillard made a motion to allocate \$15,000.00 to the SHARE Foundation to be used to help a Fall River resident with a disability, in the Memory of Les Cory.

Second: Commissioner Lisa Silva

All in favor; none opposed; abstentions: 0

6. Work Group Updates:

- a. ADA Updates: A meeting about audio pedestrian signs that was to take place in January has been rescheduled for the work group meeting on Wednesday, February 24, 2021.
- b. Policies: No updates, at this time.
- c. Finance: Current pooled cash totaled \$259,805.18, as of January, 2021.
- d. Outreach:
 1. Lisa Silva stated that during the work group meeting, after much discussion, they decided to cancel Disability Awareness Day for 2021. They just couldn't see it happening this year with COVID-19, people working from home and trying to get agencies on board. They are now looking at a date of September 24, 2022. Lisa did reach out to the band they booked for 2021 and has secured it for 2022.
 2. Daniel Robillard and Lisa Silva submitted a proposal for discussion for a yearly scholarship. The total funding would be \$32,000.00 allocated between 3 schools – B.M.C. Durfee High School, Diman Regional Vocational Technical High School and Bishop Connolly High School. The student must be a Fall River resident with a disability and has been accepted to a college that they will be attending the following year. Each school will decide which

students will receive the scholarship. The money will then be directly sent to each college on behalf of each student.

Debbie Pacheco will be meeting with the superintendent from Diman Regional High School next week. She will discuss the wishes of the commission and determine from him how to handle the situation, then she will report back to the commission at the March meeting. She will try to obtain from the Durfee Guidance Department, based on the number of students that have been accepted to college, the number of students with disabilities that will be attending college. That will give us an idea of how many students there will be.

Lisa Silva reached out to Bishop Connolly High School. They have seven eligible students.

Commissioner Daniel Robillard made a motion for the Fall River Commission of Disability to allocate the sum and amount of \$32,000.00 for educational scholarships for Fall River residents with a disability from Durfee, Diman or Bishop Connolly High Schools and have been accepted and attending college the following year.

Second: Commissioner Lisa Silva

All in favor; none opposed; abstentions: 0

7. Old Business: No updates, at this time

8. New Business:

a. Next meeting Wednesday, March 10, 2021 @ 2:00pm

b. In March SGT Kevin Dolan from the Fall River Police Department will be joining us to review and renew the Disability Parking Detail Program.

9. Adjournment at 3:15pm

Motion to Accept: Vice Chairwoman Debbie Pacheco

Second: Commissioner Daniel Robillard

All in favor; none opposed; abstentions:

Documents Distributed

Agenda

Minutes from the meeting of January 13, 2021



**City of Fall River
Massachusetts**

**Fall River
Commission on Disability**

PAUL E. COOGAN
Mayor

Dennis Polselli
Chairman

Debbie Pacheco
Vice Chairwoman

AGENDA

**FALL RIVER COMMISSION ON DISABILITY
CONFERENCE CALL MEETING**

Dial in number for Commissioners and members of the public: 1-701-802-5485

Access Code: 832-3807 followed by the pound sign (#)

Wednesday, February 10, 2021

2:00 PM

When the meeting starts for clear communication and recording, please mute your phone by pressing star6. You can still hear the meeting but we can't hear you. If you wish to speak press star6 to unmute. All votes will be taken by roll-call according to the open Meeting Laws.

1. Reading of the Open Meeting Law Statement from the Open Meeting Law Guide.
2. Roll-call: Catherine Destremps, Clerk, Health and Human Services
3. Public Input
4. Approval of minutes: Wednesday, January 13, 2021
5. Guest Presenters: Representative Valery Thorn and Executive Director, Phil Viall from the SHARE Foundation
6. Work Group Updates:
 - a. ADA Update:
 - b. Policies:

ADA Coordinator: Gary P. Howayeck, Esq. 508-324-2650

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- c. Finance
- d. Outreach:
 - 1. A decision on Disability Awareness Day schedule for Saturday, September 25, 2021 at the Kuss Middle school.
 - 2. A Funding Proposal by Commissioners Daniel Robillard and Lisa Silva to start a scholarship program on an annual basis beginning this year.
- 7. Old Business:
- 8. New Business:
 - a. Next meeting Wednesday, March 10, 2021 at 2pm via Conference Call
 - b. In March SGT Kevin Dolan from the Fall River Police Department will be joining us to review and renew the Disability Parking Detail Program.
- 9. Adjournment

To listen to a recording of the Commission on Disability Meeting call 978-990-5094

Health Department 508-324-2421