



ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

MINUTES

February 25, 2020

Lansing Customer Service Center
4166 Legacy Parkway
Lansing

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COUNCIL (AAC)

PRESENT

Scott Norris, Chair
Tom Jones, Co-Chair
Ken Buchholtz (*via conference call*)
Michael Harris
Neal McKenzie
Will Purves
Jessica Stark
Billy Vickers
Bryan Wilkinson
Kim Woolridge

ABSENT

Cindy Burkhour
Vendela Collins
Justin Lippe
Sarah Peurakoski

PRESENT FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (DNR)

Sharon Schafer, AAC Sponsor
Stacy Haughey, Upper Peninsula AAC Sponsor and Field Deputy (*via conference call*)
Michael Holsinger, ADA Coordinator
Yolanda Taylor, Assistant to the AAC

PRESENT FROM THE DNR ACCESSIBILITY TEAM (A-TEAM)

Lynne Thoma, Fisheries
Erin Campbell, Grants Management
Kirk Lapham, Legislative and Legal Affairs (*via conference call*)
David Haupt, Marketing and Outreach (*via conference call*)
Diana Paiz Engle, Michigan History Center
Mike Evanoff, Parks and Recreation
Ryan Soulard and Kristin Wildman, Wildlife

INTERPRETERS

Andi Chumley and Lera Lowrie

OTHERS PRESENT

Chad Stewart and Ashley Autenrieth, DNR Wildlife Division
Olivia Jacques and Caitlin Chloste, Lighthouse Neurological Rehab Center – Traverse City
Rebecca Powell and Kelly Frake, Department of Civil Rights
Steve Metzger, Senior Planner/ADA Specialist, DLZ Corporation
Duncan Wyeth, former member (*via conference call*)
Christine McDunnough, Guest

REGULAR MEETING

INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Norris called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. He announced that their department has changed its name to the Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity. He is still with the Braille and Talking Book Library, Bureau of Services for Blind Persons. He then asked for roll call and introductions around the room.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chair Norris asked the council if they had any additions, corrections or discussion regarding the December 3, 2019 Minutes. No additional corrections, edits or discussion was offered.

Chair Norris requested a motion to approve the December 3, 2019 Minutes; Michael Harris motioned to approve the Minutes; Kim Woolridge seconded the motion; the motion unanimously carried, and the December 2019 Minutes were approved.

DEER REGULATIONS

The Chair reported that the ad hoc subcommittee on deer regulations met earlier to further discuss the potential of including the deaf and hard of hearing in the reserved/special hunts for people with disabilities during the 2020 season.

Chad Stewart, deer biologist/management specialist for the department, reported there will be two rounds of deer regulation amendments this year, with the first-round of proposed amendments having an immediate deadline in March. Therefore, the subcommittee agreed to first move forward with their recommendation to include the deaf and hard of hearing in the reserved/special hunts for people with disabilities in the 2020 season. They also discussed the possibility of changing the names of the Liberty and Independence hunts to make them more identifiable. Chad will reach out to specific members on the council for assistance in developing language and identifying the legal definition of deaf and hard of hearing. The proposed form of identification and certification would be similar to the special permits for people with disabilities that currently exist (i.e. permit to hunt from a standing vehicle). Chad reminded the council that the Natural Resources Commission ultimately has the final decision on any changes or amendments to the deer regulations.

Chad reported he will then reengage with the subcommittee to identify any other potential areas or recommended amendments to the deer regulations that would make hunting more inclusive for people with disabilities.

Neal McKenzie, council member that initially proposed this amendment, also commented about their subcommittee's recommendation of creating a sportsman's card or some type of identification card that notifies law enforcement that the person is deaf or hard of hearing. Annie Urasky, with the Department of Civil Rights, created a placard that notifies law enforcement that the person is deaf, hard of hearing or has a communication barrier. The downloadable placard can be found at the link below:

https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdcr/Visor_card_525194_7.pdf

Annie Urasky has also proposed legislation that would identify a person as deaf/hard of hearing in the bar code on their driver's license.

Kim Woolridge cautioned the subcommittee to make sure identification of a disability is voluntary and not required.

Will Purves responded that the proposed changes to the deer regulations to include the deaf/hard of hearing in the restricted/special hunts would not require statutory changes but, instead, would be monitored in the field as it currently is for other hunters with disabilities (i.e. Hunt from a Standing Vehicle permit, physician's statement).

Chad will keep the subcommittee and this council apprised on the status of the proposed amendments to the deer regulations.

ADA 30-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

Kim Woolridge turned over this update to Kelly Frake, ADA Compliance Division, as she is spearheading the 30-year anniversary of the ADA. Currently, the plan is to hold a resource fair to highlight state agencies and services. The Lansing Center is reserved for a July 23, 2020 event. The preliminary budget is in the range of \$20,000.00. In order to fund this event, departments are being asked to contribute approximately \$2,000.00 each, but they could also provide in-kind donations of services (i.e. printing, accommodations, etc.). The deadline for contributions from departments is March 4.

Kelly reported there are 14 members on the planning committee. Several subcommittees have been created to address accommodations, funding, communication, programming, registration/volunteers, venue, etc. If members of the council are interested in participating, they can contact Kelly at 517-241-1344 or frakek@michigan.gov.

Kim reported the budget has increased to around \$23,000.00. They will be encouraging state agencies to assist and get involved by contributing, as well as highlighting their programs and services. It will also allow state agencies to receive feedback on their programs and services from the disability community. They are also working with the Governor's Office.

Kim further commented that they are looking for speakers, or other forms of entertainment or dissemination of information. A few speakers were suggested, including Duncan Wyeth, Scott Norris, Richard Bernstein, John Sanford (representing the African-American community), Tony Benavidez (representing the Hispanic community) who formerly ran the Cristo Rey Community Center, and Chris Hunter, long-time director of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing who may still be in the Lansing area. Michael Harris offered to reach out to Bernstein. Duncan offered to follow up with Kim on other speakers.

The event will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., and they anticipate capping the event at 500 registrants. It would be a free-flowing event, where attendees could listen to a speaker, participate in a panel discussion, or just hang out at the resource fair where state agencies would have booths set up to highlight the different programs and services offered by the state. The Farmers Market on the Capitol lawn also takes place on the same day.

The planning committee is asking for the use of accessible equipment, videos and materials. They are also looking into transportation needs. Bryan Wilkinson suggested Dean Transportation. They have coordinated travel for a lot of the adaptive sports programs at Michigan State University.

Diana Paiz Engle is part of the planning committee and offered to coordinate equipment and the transportation since she sits on a committee with CATA.

Sharon Schafer commented that the department is willing to assist, and she will be challenging the department's accessibility team to assist, attend and participate. There may be an issue, however, with loaning out the department's equipment, especially since July will be right in the heart of camping season. She also suggested possibly getting Under the Radar involved to do

some visual footage of the event. She will check on the contract with Under the Radar and get back to Kim.

Neal reminded the planning committee that closed captioning and interpreters will also need to be figured into the budget.

Kelley and Kim thanked the council for their input and suggestions and will update the council at the next meeting.

HUNTER SAFETY INSTRUCTORS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Jessica Stark reminded the council that this discussion is the result of Sgt. Mshar's comments at the December meeting regarding the apprenticeship program and the fact that, once his son (who has a disability) turns 18, he would not be legal to hunt because of his disability and the inability to take the hunter safety training. Jessica, as a hunter safety instructor and one that runs a program to get people with disabilities out hunting, would like to look at what options are available. She would also like to determine how many safety instructors are licensed or educated in providing this training to people with disabilities.

Bryan Wilkinson clarified that he is not a certified hunter safety instructor yet but is going through the program to become certified. He is, however, a Level 2 U.S.A. archery instructor.

Some proposals that Jessica threw out would include having a guide, a life-long apprenticeship program, specific classes designed for people with varying disabilities, educating the communities about the special/early hunts, and looking into including people with intellectual disabilities in some of these special/restricted hunts. If the sportsman's card idea moves forward, that would be a good option of identifying someone that needs a guide or apprentice while hunting. Also, what would an application look like and who would qualify.

Bryan Wilkinson commented that it starts in the classroom. Right now, not all facilities where they teach hunter safety courses are accessible nor do they provide materials in an accessible format. The on-line courses also are not accessible. He suggests the subcommittee could work on identifying facilities where accessibility is an issue and identify instructors that are trained or provide hunter safety courses to people with disabilities.

Kim Woolridge responded that, if people/organizations are receiving money to provide hunter safety classes, then they should use those dollars to make improvements to their facilities and materials to make them accessible.

Yolanda Taylor commented that a list of accessible shooting ranges is located on the department's accessible recreation web page. However, Kim is referring to non-state owned or private facilities, or people that are certified by the department to teach these courses, whether it be in person or on-line.

Bryan Wilkinson further commented that there is a lack of curriculum for people with disabilities. For example, U.S.A. Archery has a manual and list of things people can do at an adaptive archery range. He offered to work with Jessica and/or the subcommittee to develop such curriculum or guidelines for instructors.

Scott Norris commented that he took the on-line course and was not able to complete it. It was not compatible with his screen reader and he had to have a staff person download some of the materials into Word documents so he could read them. Also, some of the links contained within the on-line course were broken.

After further discussion, the following issues or actions were identified:

- Determine how many hunter safety course facilities, classrooms and field day locations are or are not accessible.
- Identify how many instructors are certified or trained in providing these courses to people with disabilities.
- Reevaluate and redesign the on-line courses for accessibility.
- Develop curriculum for the instructors on providing training to people with disabilities.
- Provide a disability awareness training course for instructors, incorporating diversity, disability, equity and inclusion training, and demonstrations on what it is like for a person to hunt, fish, shoot or recreate with a disability.
- Consider training for guides on working with people with disabilities.
- Consider extending the apprenticeship program, creating a life-long apprenticeship program, or some other means of allowing people with cognitive disabilities to continue to hunt.
- Look at programs or services that may be offered by other organizations.
- Include additional disabled hunters in the restricted/special hunts and identify what type of certification would be required.
- Connect people to the resources/information.

Michigan Rehabilitation Services and the Centers for Independent Living offer diversity and disability training courses.

Ken Buchholtz commented that there are permits available through the department that allow a person/organization to take groups out hunting or fishing, and the permit is good for a year. This is another option to consider. Jessica replied their organization has a lifetime license that covers their events and participants at Interlochen State Park.

Lynne Thoma, Fisheries, also commented there is a permit available through Law Enforcement to allow someone to take groups out fishing. It is also good for an entire year and only the person with the permit is required to have a fishing license. You do not need to be certified or be an RN to apply for these permits.

Billy Vickers commented that it would also be helpful to have trained guides so that people know they are working with someone that is familiar with their disability. Other organizations that provide hunting or fishing opportunities to people with disabilities include the National Wild Turkey Federation – Michigan Chapter, Michigan Operation Freedom Outdoors, and Buckmasters.

Bryan commented that the Demmer Shooting Sports Education and Training Center in Lansing is also a bronze level Olympic and Paralympic adaptive sports facility for people with disabilities. Bryan received his archery certification at Demmer. They provide equipment to people with disabilities for free. They are an under-utilized facility so possibly some training could take place at their facility.

Neal McKenzie commented that he would be willing to become an instructor for people that are deaf or hard of hearing. He also suggested that maybe the School for the Deaf and the School for the Blind would be options for providing hunter education training to the deaf and blind and to draw more youth to the sport.

Sharon Schafer offered to follow-up with the chief of Law Enforcement to reevaluate their hunter education requirements, the facilities where they provide hunter education courses, identify the number of instructors that are trained or certified in working with people with disabilities, and reevaluate their on-line course.

Jessica appreciates Sharon's approach and included that staff and the instructors need to realize that some people may not be able to sit through an entire class, they may need materials read to them, and some may need a more tailored class. Law Enforcement staff are welcome to contact Jessica or Bryan with questions or guidance.

Will Purves commented that an extension to the ad hoc committee on deer regulations would be to identify other people with specific disabilities that could be considered for the restricted/special hunts and creating an extension of the apprenticeship program.

Hunter safety instructors are required to attend a class about every three years. This may be an excellent opportunity for the department to provide disability awareness training.

Jessica thanked council members and staff for their input. She commented that she will wait to hear back from the department/Sharon before moving this to an ad hoc committee for further discussion.

All members offered to reach out to varying organizations to identify what hunting/fishing programs are offered to people with disabilities and how they went about providing training, etc. They will send their findings, thoughts and ideas to Jessica and Bryan.

COUNCIL MEMBER UPDATES

Good Things Happening Around the State

Justin Lippe, MParks, was unable to attend the meeting. He will provide an update at the next meeting about the good things their organization has been doing with local parks and recreation departments. However, the Come Out and Play at the Capitol annual event is scheduled for June 24.

Ken Buchholtz reported that the National Wild Turkey Federation had their annual conference in Nashville, Tennessee where the Wheelin' Sportsmen, namely Ken, received their Volunteer of the Year award. Ken commented that this whole program started at a dialysis center in 2007 with no funding and, throughout the years, he never dreamed it would come together like it has. He is very proud of this program. Lots of good people, volunteers, landowners, sponsors, and community have made it what it is today. Ken goes out to nursing homes, assisted living facilities, etc. to get people with disabilities interested in hunting and in the outdoors. His motto is, "*If There's a Wheel There's a Way.*"

Tom Jones reported that MiOFO will be hosting their 5th annual Bow Fishing tournament, "*Bows for the Brave,*" the last weekend in May on Kent Lake in Kensington Metro Park, partnering with the Bow Fishing Association of Michigan. They will be harvesting invasive species, mostly carp. Both Bryan and Billy participated in last year's tournament and speared huge goldfish that were discarded by pet owners. Tom also reported that his tracked wheelchair will be delivered this week to this year's essay contest winner, Chuck Bohn out of Freeland, Michigan. Ford Motor Company's photo team will be there. They will probably do a live stream and video footage.

Will Purves reported that they just submitted a grant application to the Livingston County United Way, in partnership with Tom and Island Lake State Recreation Area, for the purchase and installation of two accessible hunting blinds at Island Lake. The CIL (Centers for Independent Living) will be working in conjunction with Tom and Island Lake to offer continued programs for people with disabilities and expand some of Tom's programs north of where the hunts currently take place. Will also reported that his organization now has a person dedicated to outdoor recreation for Livingston County, Mark Heymes. He will be working with Island Lake on the programs that will be offered at that location.

Tom explained how the accessible, elevated hunting blind program works. For example, the Pierce Road Unit is a restricted area with a dozen hunting blinds. They are basically used as wildlife viewing towers until the early restricted/special hunts, when all twelve hunting blinds are utilized by disabled hunters. If Tom offers to donate a hunting blind to a state game area or other department lands, their biologists need to review their game area/land use orders and implement the same criteria used at the Sharonville State Game Area. One blind allows one disabled hunter on that state land, and so on. For Island Lake, the same criteria will apply for the two hunting blinds they will be donating at that location, if the grant is approved.

Kim Wooldridge announced that the State ADA Coordinator position has been posted. This position in the past has been an appointed position, but they have decided it should be a classified position, so it was only offered to state employees. Kim has been acting as the Interim Director for a little over a year. She has applied and they should know who the new State ADA Director is by the time this council meets again.

Other Upcoming Events

Ken Buchholtz announced his group will be out for the turkey hunting season, working with Delta County Recreation, the first Saturday in August.

Will Purves announced they will be having an adaptive and inclusive biking event at Sterling State Park in Monroe County on May 16 (Saturday), working with PEAC (Programs to Educate All Cyclists) out of Ypsilanti. They will be bringing truckloads of bikes, hand cycles, different side-by-side cycles, etc.

Mike Harris announced the Ann Arbor Veterans Administration (VA) is hosting an adaptive sports educational session to educate workers at the VA. The workers then educate and work with the veterans in various programs and sports that are available to them. Dr. Melissa Tinney, who serves on the UMAISE (University of Michigan Adaptive and Inclusive Sports Experience) Executive Board is overseeing this event. The UMAISE offers programs including basketball, soccer, kayaking, tree climbing, camping and cycling. Mike invited Tom, Billy, Bryan and other members to attend if interested. It is a two-hour event mid-March. Mike will provide the exact dates to the members.

Bryan Wilkinson announced his wife is due in March with their second child. He will continue his adaptive sports programs throughout the summer and will notify everyone when the events are scheduled. Wheelchair tennis and hand cycling will occur in the summer, and he will continue his archery programs through Southeast Livingston County Recreation. Tennis starts in May, and cycling will begin when the weather warms up.

Billy Vickers announced that the University of Michigan (UofM) Rehab Institute in Detroit has a huge sports abilities program, which is run by Mario Dixon. They do tennis at UofM's Varsity Tennis Center every Wednesday. Michigan State University's adaptive sports program, which Bryan is closely connected with, has events almost every day of the week to include handball, tennis, floor hockey, etc. Billy and Bryan will share dates of events at both universities as they are scheduled. Billy also commented that he would like to see a lot of these organizations work together in providing similar programs around the state.

Billy also asked the council if there is any information or resources for trout fishing on the inland lakes and rivers for people with disabilities. The resources to find accessible rivers or inland lakes via a wheelchair are scarce. He is often confined to fishing from riverbanks which is difficult, especially in fly only zones, due to limited upper body mobility and with trees, overhanging brush, etc. nearby.

Several suggestions were offered, including the department's Family Friendly Fishing Waters, the accessible recreation webpage, www.michigan.gov/dnraccessibility, and several private angler groups like the Anglers of the AuSable or Friends of the Jordan River to see what information or services they may offer. Ryan Soulard and Yolanda Taylor said they will connect Billy with some of those organizations and/or accessible sites. Local bait shops are also a good source of information.

There was a brief discussion on exceptions to the fly only zones for people with disabilities to use alternate gear (i.e. spinners or live bait), but the fly only zones are designated as such to protect the habitat. Lynne Thoma, Fisheries Division, also commented that most rivers are so remote it makes it difficult for any angler to access. The other legal issue is making sure you are not fishing from a bank that is considered private property. Floating a river is another option.

Bryan commented that maybe there are river systems or locations, especially within the state parks system, that could be identified as wheelchair or tracked chair accessible. Billy noted that he fished in Elk Rapids and they made the river ADA accessible by installing ramps that extend into the river. The Boardman River is also accessible.

Sharon Schafer responded that the department's accessibility team could have this discussion at a future meeting to see what they may be able to come up with. They also have subcommittees that review projects for ADA compliance that are vetted before bringing them to this council. She suggested Billy join the council's subcommittee that reviews these types of projects for input, with the understanding that the department cannot make every site accessible, but each project is worth considering.

Tom also offered to work with Billy to provide materials to build ramps or extended platforms if there are locations that the department or other public organizations would be willing to install.

Billy responded that accessible fishing is another area where a sportsman's card would come in handy if they were approached by law enforcement or private citizens.

DEPARTMENT UPDATES

DNR Executive Updates

Sharon Schafer reported that the Office of Minerals Management, which was temporarily brought under her supervision about a year ago, is now permanently a part of the Finance and Operations Division. She commented that she has learned a lot related to oil, gas, sand and gravel, metallic and non-metallic mineral leasing. They will be hiring a section manager at some point, which will relieve some of her oversight.

ADA Coordinator Updates

Mike Holsinger, the department's ADA coordinator and manager of Field Operations, reported they were awarded three grants for shooting ranges at the Barry State Game Area, and in Roscommon and Ontonagon counties. Roscommon will have a 1,000-yard range. They completed the Fife Lake shooting range last year, just completed the Supply Road shooting range near Traverse City, the Echo Point shooting range in Allegan, and will be finishing up the shooting range in Lapeer this year. They will also be working on a shooting range in Marquette County. All shooting ranges are designed to be ADA compliant.

Mike also reported that the department only had one Title II complaint this year and they are working on a response. In December, the department completed a new Customer Service Center in Sault Ste. Marie which is now open. He passed out the new Fishing Guide which

identifies the department's Customer Service Centers near the back of the guide. The Fishing Guide is also available on-line.

COUNCIL BUSINESS

Next Meeting

The Chair announced that the next meeting of the council is scheduled for May 19, 2020 at the Rose Lake Shooting Range in Lansing.

Location for August Meeting

The Chair reminded the council that past meetings have all been held at state facilities. He would like to offer council members the opportunity to host a meeting or identify a location that they would like to visit this year. Discussion ensued regarding various locations, to include the Island Lake State Recreation Area in Brighton, the Ann Arbor Center for Independent Living or UofM's Environmental Interpretive Center (Purves offered to provide disability awareness training if members come to Ann Arbor and are interested), Hartwick Pines State Park near Grayling, and the Carl T. Johnson Center at Mitchell State Park in Cadillac. Tom offered the Sharonville State Game Area for a tour, but it does not have a meeting room. The Chair responded that the council has met in state park garages or maintenance facilities in the past so that would not be a problem.

These suggestions will be taken back to the office and Yolanda will work on a location.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None, but Diana Paiz Engle, accessibility team member, reported that she went on a cross-country skiing adventure with a group called "Ski for Light" in Roscommon that matches guides with people with mobility disabilities, and went to Casper, Wyoming to ski with the international group and made a presentation on some of the accessible recreation that Michigan has to offer.

CLOSING BUSINESS

Yolanda brought the Council's attention to the poster that was hanging up in the room. It is the photo of council member Billy Vickers in a tracked chair and Christine traveling down the Old Growth Trail at Hartwick Pines State Park with fall color foliage. This is one of the photos that was taken when Billy did the photo shoot for Pure Michigan. The poster reads Accessibility for Everyone and has the accessible recreation webpage listed at the bottom. It is hanging up in the lobby of the department's Lansing headquarters in Constitution Hall.

Some of the council members asked for additional posters to hang up at their organizations and events. Yolanda will check into obtaining additional posters for distribution at the next meeting.

The council thanked Billy and Christine for volunteering their time and giving the department exposure.

ADJOURN

Chair Norris asked if there were any further comments. No additional comments were offered. He then asked for a motion to adjourn.

Kim Woolridge motioned for adjournment; Michael Harris seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.