



ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

MINUTES

February 26, 2019

DNR Lansing Customer Service Center
4166 Legacy Parkway
Lansing

ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COUNCIL (AAC)

PRESENT

Scott Norris, Chair
Tom Jones, Vice-Chair
Ken Buchholtz (*via conference call*)
Michael Harris
Justin Lippe
Neal McKenzie
Sarah Peurakoski (*via conference call*)
Will Purves
Bryan Wilkinson

ABSENT

Al Bobrofsky
Cindy Burkhour
Vendella Collins
Jonathon Edgerly
Kim Woolridge

PRESENT FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (DNR)

Sharon Schafer, AAC Executive Sponsor
Stacy Haughey, Upper Peninsula Regional Coordinator/U.P. Sponsor (*via conference call*)
Michael Holsinger, ADA Coordinator
Yolanda Taylor, Assistant to the AAC

PRESENT FROM THE DNR ACCESSIBILITY TEAM (A-TEAM)

Lynne Thoma, Fisheries
Christie Bayus, Grants Management (A-Team Chair)
Tamara Jorkasky, Grants Management (A-Team Co-Chair)
Kirk Lapham, Legislative and Legal Affairs
David Haupt and Cindy Krueger, Marketing and Outreach
Diana Engle, Michigan History Center
Mike Evanoff, Parks and Recreation
Kristin Wildman, Wildlife

INTERPRETERS

April Davidson and Stacy Pierce

OTHERS PRESENT

None.

REGULAR MEETING

INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Norris called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. with 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 August 21, 2018 Minutes. No corrections, edits or discussion was offered.

Chair Norris requested a motion to approve the August 21, 2018 Minutes; Tom Jones motioned to approve the Minutes; Bryan Wilkinson seconded the motion; the motion unanimously carried, and the August 2018 Minutes were approved.

OVERVIEW OF AUGUST 2018 MEETING

Chair Norris and the council discussed the August 2018 meeting, more particularly as it related to Pure Michigan's presentation and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Centennial Celebration of Michigan's state parks, including the council's recommendations to incorporate more photos or videos of people with disabilities enjoying outdoor recreation.

Pure Michigan

Council member Michael Harris commented that the DNR is doing a great job promoting and enhancing recreational opportunities for people with disabilities. However, why not have Pure Michigan include a disabled veteran in one of their promotional commercials, or post photos on the DNR's websites. This would be a positive reinforcement for veterans returning from service, and a way of giving back to those that gave so much for our country.

Member Will Purves asked if the council could invite Pure Michigan back for a progress report on their campaign and the steps they have or will be taking to promote inclusion of people with disabilities.

Yolanda Taylor and Cindy Krueger will work with Travel Michigan to determine if they can return to give an update in 2019. Cindy also mentioned that the DNR has monthly conference calls with Travel Michigan. She said the conversations do include incorporating accessible recreation in their campaign. Cindy has also been busy updating the properties on the DNR's web sites regarding accessible recreation campsites and campgrounds.

Sharon Schafer and Mike Holsinger commented that they would like to be invited to one of those conference calls to talk about the council and the accessibility team.

Centennial Celebration

Yolanda has been sending press releases and updates about the Centennial Celebration to all council and accessibility team members, including information on how they can get involved by sharing stories, memories and photos of their favorite times at a state park.

Mike Evanoff commented that the newest announcement stated that a person who donated \$100 or more to a state park would receive a state park vanity plate for the front of their vehicle. Mike reported that that promotion did not go through because of the cost of the plate itself, but donations are still more than welcome and appreciated. However, the elk and ducks unlimited legal driver's license plates can still be purchased through the Secretary of State's offices.

Visit www.michigan.gov/stateparks100 for information, updates or events regarding the Centennial Celebration. There will be a big celebration at Interlochen State Park in May.

Michael Harris asked if the DNR has a booth at the U.P. State Fair. Council member Ken Buchholtz and ADA Coordinator Mike Holsinger attended the August 2018 U.P. State Fair. Ken brought his accessible hunting blind and Mike passed out the postcards regarding accessible recreation to visitors, as well as information about special permits. Ken has been

attending the past couple of years, displaying his accessible hunting blind and wheelchair lift. The hope is to have a larger presence with more displays in 2019.

Dave Haupt mentioned that they also have a Michigan State Fair at the Suburban Showplace in Novi. It is being held August 29 to September 2, 2019. Vice Chair Tom Jones mentioned the day prior to opening, August 28, it is either a discounted or free entry to get a sneak peak at all the vendors and displays prior to the show officially opening.

Buchholtz also mentioned his work through Wheelin' Sportsmen, where he takes people with disabilities out deer and turkey hunting every year. They are in the process of updating their website right now, but he will let the council know when it has been completed so they can share information and events with friends, family or constituents.

Discussions continued regarding how the department and other agencies should work together to get more information about accessible recreational opportunities out to the disabled communities, including veterans and the deaf community.

DEMO ON AIRA

Chair Norris gave a brief overview and a demonstration of a new service called Aira. Aira connects people who are blind or low vision to trained, remotely located professional agents that are dedicated to further enhancing everyday experiences. Through this hands-free app on a smartphone, or through an optional pair of Horizon Smart Glasses, Aira delivers instant access to visual information at the touch of a button.

Scott then demonstrated this service at the meeting. He called and was connected to an agency representative who, through his smart glasses, explained what the room looked like, how it was set up, the number of people and descriptions of people in the room, and read documents that Scott placed in front of the glasses. She was also able to hear and interact with everyone in the room. The service they provide is limitless, from reading menus to providing direction through a busy airport or walking a trail. Their service enhances a person's everyday engagement and independence.

Council member Will Purves asked what type of training the agents receive. The agent responded that the training is very extensive, and it is difficult to get hired. Only about 1% of the applicants get hired. They also attend a 3 to 4-week boot camp training session on how to provide verbal descriptions and learn how to work with the blind. There is more extensive training on navigation.

Members asked if there is any service that they do not provide. The agent responded that they provide any kind of service, such a reading prescription bottles, navigating people through buildings, to reviewing websites or documents that are not accessible with a screen reader. They have also assisted with recreational activities including gymnastics, ice skating, bike riding, hiking, skiing, navigating a blind rowing team, and narrating a widely broadcast Super Bowl.

For traveling, if an area map is not available, they will create one. An example includes mapping out the meeting location and including the name and location of area restaurants, facilities, gas stations, etc.

They also work with people that are both deaf and blind by communicating using text script. It even translates and repeats what you typed before sending the message. All agents are also trained in American sign language.

The cost of the service varies. Subscription is based on the type of plan the person prefers, ranging anywhere from \$29 to \$199 per month depending on their needs or desired service. Agents are available 24/7, 365 days per year. The company is currently working towards having this device and service covered by insurance, and they are also currently working with the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs to get it recognized as a prosthetic device for Americans with disabilities.

The council thanked the agent for her time and expressed their appreciation for companies like this that think above and beyond to provide people with disabilities a sense of, or true, independence.

COUNCIL MEMBERS AGENDA ITEMS

Council member Neal McKenzie had a few questions and suggestions for the DNR on how they could provide more information to the deaf community.

iPhone App

He suggested iPhone apps where the DNR can share information about various outdoor recreation opportunities and locations, such as hunting, fishing, etc. Department staff responded that the DNR has created some iPhone apps. They will send a list of DNR mobile apps to McKenzie and the other council members.

Driver's License Identification

Neal also suggested it would be a great idea if there was something affixed to a person's driver's license or state identification card identifying the person as deaf and may need an interpreter. In addition, if the DNR could develop a hunting app that not only identifies that person as deaf, but it would also identify where that person is located when they go hunting. It would be ideal for conservation officers and/or rescuers. It was explained to Neal that the driver's license suggestion would be something that the Secretary of State would administer, but the hunting app is something that could be considered.

Free Fishing/Hunting Licenses

Neal was not concerned with giving people with disabilities free hunting and fishing licenses, but he was more concerned about allowing that person's assistant (i.e. interpreter or spotter), to accompany them without requiring them to purchase a hunting or fishing license.

Staff explained that only the person that is going to take the shot, or the person that is actually fishing, is required to have a license. If the other person, or assistant, is not planning to shoot or kill a deer, or does not intend to go fishing, they are allowed to accompany the person with a disability without having to purchase or carry a hunting or fishing license.

5% of Elk Drawing Allocated to People with Disabilities

Neal's final suggestion was to allocate 5% of the elk drawing to people with disabilities and allow people over the age of 60 to reapply every 2 to 3 years. It is a once in a lifetime drawing so, people in their later years should have the opportunity to reapply more often. For people in their 20s, they have a lifetime to reapply.

Staff explained that getting an elk permit is difficult for everybody. However, to increase a person's chances, they can also apply for the Pure Michigan Hunt. It is only \$5 and they can apply as many times as they want. The package includes multiple licenses, including an elk license if you are the winner.

Chair Norris commented that, from his own personal experience, if a person with or without a disability is willing to spend the money to purchase the equipment for hunting, fishing, etc., that is the expensive part, and the license to be allowed to hunt or fish is the miniscule.

Department staff also explained other opportunities or permits that are available for people with disabilities, including special hunts, free fishing weekends, free ORV weekends, family friendly fishing waters, state parks or game areas that have elevated hunting blinds and tracked chairs, etc.

Neal also asked about identifying and sharing information about hunting or fishing 'hot spots.' The response among all was unanimous in that "...nobody shares their hot spots." However, the department has information on its web sites and apps that may be helpful in finding locations, or a person could check the local bait shops that share fishing information.

Department staff also shared numerous sights and ideas where Neal and others could find helpful information about all outdoor recreation. Department staff thanked Neal for his information, input and suggestions. They will be taken back to the department's accessibility team for further research and consideration. The accessibility team will report back at a future council meeting.

DEPARTMENT UPDATES

Executive Updates

Sharon Schafer reported that Dean Molnar, the assistant chief for Law Enforcement, will be retiring after 29 years with the department. Also, we have a new Governor, Gretchen Whitmer, and a new DNR Director, Daniel Eichinger. The former DNR Director Keith Creagh retired but is now a member of the Natural Resources Commission. Director Eichinger was the Executive Director for the Michigan United Conservation Clubs. Previously, he worked for Central Michigan University, former Lieutenant Governor John Cherry, and has also worked for the DNR as the Legislative Liaison and in the Wildlife Division. The Director is currently conducting meetings with staff around the state, and he would also like to address this council at an upcoming meeting. Craig Brunet is the new Legislative Liaison and formerly worked in Representative Lindberg's office and in the Michigan Department of Transportation.

The Governor's Executive Order is also realigning the Department of Environmental Quality into the Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy. This will require the Office of the Great Lakes to move from the DNR to the new department, referred to as EGLE, and will also include the Department of Energy.

2018 MNRTF Grants Awarded

Tamara Jorkasky reported on the number of grants that were awarded in 2018. The results of grants awarded can be found on the department's website at www.michigan.gov/dnrgrants, and then clicking on the specific grant program.

ADA Coordinator Updates

Mike Holsinger reported that the Department of Civil Rights is conducting training for all state ADA coordinators, covering various areas of the ADA. He also reported that he and Tamara Jorkasky attended an ADA meeting through the Disability Network of Michigan, where they fielded questions about how communities can apply for accessible recreation grants.

Mike also mentioned the department received a request to paint a stripe down the middle of the Berry Junction trail to aide a person with limited sight. The department is looking into this request, but it would only be applied to 3/4 of the trail.

A-Team Updates

Christie Bayus, who has been the A-Team Chair, will step down in May. Tamara Jorkasky will become the new Chair, and a Vice-Chair will be chosen soon.

Diana Engle reported that the Kal-Haven trail project is moving along. The design of the physical markers is nearing completion, and physical changes to the trail have been made. The mobile app is also nearing completion and will be delivered to Michigan State University to construct the app.

The project will include physical markers along the 33-mile linear trail, and a mobile app that would be accessible using a screen reader to navigate the trail. The app will be images with alternate text for the visually and hearing impaired. It will also ping to the phone to alert someone that there is something at that location to hear, see, smell, etc. It will be GPS enabled.

The council will be notified when the trail is near completion.

COUNCIL BUSINESS

2019 Meeting Dates

The 2019 meeting dates were distributed to the council. The council agreed that they would like to hold the August meeting in the Muskegon area. Chair Norris reminded the council that they have been asking to meet in Muskegon for quite some time so, the expectation is that council members show up and attend. The date on the handout for the May meeting will be corrected to reflect May 7, 2019.

Chair/Vice Chair Appointments

Scott Norris is the Chair, and Tom Jones is the Vice Chair, but it is time to appoint a new chair and vice-chair or reappoint them both.

Will Purves made a motion to reappoint both Scott Norris as the Chair and Tom Jones as the Vice Chair; Neal McKenzie seconded the motion; and the motion unanimously carried.

Member Reappointments

Some council members terms have expired; however, some may have been reappointed incorrectly. Staff is going to review the by-laws and appointment dates to determine if corrections are necessary.

Vacancies

The council still has four vacancies. Chair Norris once again asked council members to seek out and submit names to Yolanda so that she can send them an application. Chair Norris told the council that this is their homework assignment. Submit names of people that represent organizations or groups that would be compatible and beneficial to the council's mission. Names should be submitted to Yolanda before the next meeting.

Council Updates

Vice Chair Tom Jones reported that he is still working on his goal of placing accessible hunting/viewing blinds in all state parks or game areas. He is asking for input and assistance from the DNR, the council and the department's accessibility team. If department staff or council members have suggestions, they can contact Tom directly.

Tom also wants to partner with Pure Michigan and the Centennial Celebration by advertising these hunting blinds and possibly having a contest on the best spots (i.e. state game areas or state parks) to place them. Staff suggested he first contact Maia Turek regarding the Centennial Celebration, and Kristin Phillips about getting Pure Michigan to advertise them once they have been placed. Eventually, down the road, we can get them to advertise people using these blinds.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

CLOSING BUSINESS

Sharon thanked Chair Norris and Vice Chair Jones for their leadership on the council.

The next meeting of the council is scheduled for May 7 and will be held at the Glassen Education Center, Rose Lake Shooting Range, in Bath.

ADJOURN

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

Michael Harris motioned for adjournment; Will Purves seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned at noon.

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