

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MAKEFIELD
DISABILITY ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES
January 8, 2025

A meeting of the Disability Advisory Board of the Township of Lower Makefield was held at the Township building on January 8, 2025. Chairperson Huchler opened the meeting at 6:03 pm.

Those present:

Lisa Huchler, Chairperson (in person)
Abbey Yeatts, Vice Chairperson (in person)
Cynthia Lang, Secretary (via zoom)
Michele Williams, Member (via zoom)
Kierstyn Zolfo, Member (in person)

John Lewis, Supervisor Liaison (in person)

APPROVAL OF THE OCTOBER 9, 2024 MINUTES

Ms. Williams moved, Ms. Lang seconded, and the October 9, 2024 minutes with one minor correction were approved unanimously.

NEW MEMBER WELCOME

Ms. Kierstyn Zolfo was appointed by LMT Board of Supervisors for a 2-year term. Ms. Zolfo has experience working with the Social Security Administration's Appeals Council for disability claims, has served on other outside township boards and has experience in writing articles, etc. We look forward to having Ms. Zolfo on the Board and with her professional experience will bring a new prospective, writing expertise and knowledge of important issues. We often talk about applying for grants, and the Board might be able to have Ms. Zolfo assist with that process.

REORGANIZATION

The reorganization of Board members for 2025 was as follows:

Lisa Huchler, Chairperson - Motion made by Ms. Williams and seconded by Ms. Yeatts.

Approved unanimously by all board members.

Abbey Yeatts, Vice Chairperson - Motion made by Ms. Huchler and seconded by Ms. Williams.

Approved unanimously by all board members.

Cynthia Lang, Secretary - Motion made by Ms. Huchler and seconded by Ms. Yeatts. Approved unanimously by all board members.

Liaison, John Lewis assigned at Board of Supervisors (BOS) reorganization meeting.

OPEN POSITIONS

Ms. Huchler stated that there is currently 1 alternate position open for the Disability Advisory Board (DAB). Please send a letter of interest with a current resume to Township Manager at admin@lmt.org. For further information, please email dab@lmt.org or leave a message at the LMT main number at 267-274-1100. You can also reach out to any LMT Disability Advisory Board Member.

DISABILITY ADVISORY BOARD MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Lower Makefield Township Disability Advisory Board is to educate and advise the Township and broader community about issues affecting people with disabilities; promoting inclusion, safety and equal access for everyone.

Ms. Huchler wanted to review the mission statement. We are an advisory board to the LMT Supervisors and do not directly provide services. We have a comprehensive list of services available on the website under the Disability Advisory Board webpage. We are here to assist and will give people options for agencies and services provided by the local departments, county and state. We often refer people to the Bucks County Center for Independent Living (CIL). See their website at <https://buckscil.org/>

You can also email the DAB at dab@lmt.org to contact us.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment this week.

ABLE Employment Flexibility Act

Ms. Huchler wanted to make everyone aware of current legislation. Congressman Brian Fitzpatrick (PA-1), along with Congresswoman Sharice Davids (KS-3), introduced the [***ABLE Employment Flexibility Act***](#), bipartisan legislation designed to expand financial opportunities and strengthen workplace opportunities for Americans with disabilities. ABLE accounts—special savings accounts for people with disabilities—allow individuals to save money without affecting their eligibility for federal assistance programs. This bill enables employers to make tax-free contributions to these accounts, offering greater flexibility in hiring and retaining employees with disabilities while helping these workers achieve greater financial independence.

For additional info please follow link:

<https://fitzpatrick.house.gov/2024/12/fitzpatrick-introduces-bipartisan-legislation-to-expand-savings-options-for-workers-with-disabilities>

MEMORIAL PARK- SECRET GARDEN

The Secret Garden playground's surface, installed in October 2014, needed replacement due to deterioration. The new surface has been completed. The company that manufactures and installs the surface, SofSurface, will sponsor a grand opening event in the spring (date to be announced), which will also celebrate the newly accessible Memorial Park basketball court. A 3v3 basketball tournament may be incorporated into the event. A new fence has been completed and necessary equipment was replaced. The painting of some of the smaller equipment- art for the bee, mushroom table, and ant will need to wait until spring.

The accessible pathway from the back of the playground to the bathroom is delayed until spring.

Ms. Yeatts asked if the bathrooms at Memorial could have changing tables installed to accommodate not only infants and small children but larger children that might need this type of assistance. Ms. Huchler asked if the bathrooms are large enough to have something like this installed. Maybe a table that pulls down from the wall or a small bench would be a good fit. Ms. Huchler will propose this to Monica Tierney, Parks and Rec Director.

Mr. Lewis mentioned he was visiting the park and noted there is a handicapped port-a-potty during the winter months while the bathrooms are closed for the season.

ADA TRANSITION PLAN UPDATES

The ADA Transition plan was approved by the Board of Supervisors in April 2021. Monica Tierney had asked the DAB to look through the plan and update as needed. Detailed updates to each section of the plan were sent to Monica Tierney along with some issues we noted while reviewing each of the parks. We may need to consider addressing some of the improvements/maintenance sooner while waiting for the larger, long-term projects to get started and funded.

The Parks and Recreation Department is reviewing feedback provided. They intend to include a Programming section in the plan. They also will be reaching out to other municipalities to get ideas about how they incorporate programming.

A revised ADA Transition Plan will be provided to the committee in February/March. Kellie Frain, a new Township Analyst, will be involved in the project.

LMT PROJECT UPDATES

Several Parks and Rec projects were included in the ADA Transition Plan completed in 2021. The Disability Advisory Board (DAB) will review plans, work with Parks and Rec in any planning, suggestions and monitor as progress is made.

Parks and Rec Projects and items to follow up in 2025:

Projects

- Pool Bathrooms - No movement

- Basketball courts - Memorial Park

 - The court now has a pathway from the parking lot, enabling access for the first time.

 - The parking lot will be marked properly in the spring.

- Community Center handicapped door and parking – No movement

- Bike paths

 - Improvements were approved in the budget.

 - A prioritized list will help determine the most significant needs, focusing on paths owned by the Township that can be managed in-house.

Kids Kingdom

Budget allocated for a master plan, including accessibility features and Kids Kingdom Bathrooms. Will also try to encourage having changing tables to accommodate all sizes.

Veterans Park

Park Board recommended a master plan to the BOS, though funding to proceed is not currently available.

ADA improvements included in the recommendation.

Should the plan move forward in the future, the DAB will be consulted for review and recommendations. (Further notes below)

Macclesfield Study

Hopefully a draft will be presented to the boards in the upcoming weeks.

Parks and Rec Marketing Plan Revisions

Parks and Rec will be seeking input from the DAB to devise a strategy for better outreach and education. Their goal is to ensure individuals with disabilities are informed about available services.

Ms. Yeatts said this was a perfect time to bring up the LMT Newsletter section "Recreational Opportunities". It would be helpful to list all of the Rec opportunities for children with disabilities in one section. For example, some of the current opportunities that fall in this category are Pennsbury Magik, YMS Special Stars, Cheerleading, etc. We discussed a potential name for the section and came up with a title of "Inclusive Opportunities".

Ms. Huchler will bring this to Monica Tierney's attention and see if we can include the new section in the next newsletter.

BUILDING PLAN REVIEW

Ms. Williams currently receives plans from Jim Majewski and forwards them to the board. Since Ms. Zolfo has had previous experience reviewing plans on her other Board positions and Ms. Williams has some outside personal obligations, it was suggested Ms. Zolfo could take on some of these duties.

Trinity Health

New plans were received for Trinity Health space in the McCaffrey-owned shopping center. The space is in the old Rite Aid retail space. Plans will be reviewed. The only concern at this point is the parking lot safety. Many people park in the fire lane and block the accessible sidewalk cut out that leads from the handicapped parking spots to the health center. We will make a suggestion to put horizontal striping leading from the parking spots across the busy main thoroughfare and to the curb cut out. This will help with people blocking the only accessible pathway with their vehicle parking, alert drivers to people crossing and allow people with disabilities a safer way to cross to the curb cut out.

Prickett Plan Updates

DAB will continue to review plans as they come in for other retail establishments

Veterans Park

The new plan was presented and approved at the Parks and Rec Board meeting on 12/10/24.

DAB will ensure all comments from the ADA Transition Plan are incorporated.

Pathway Note: As noted from the DAB, the current pathway from the bike path to the memorial is not ADA accessible (one step up). There is an alternative route from the bike path to the side entrance that is fully accessible from the parking lot.

NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Huchler met with a Scout earning his Community Service Badge. He wanted to know what our role was in the community, and he also asked how young people can get involved.

Mr. Lewis has been in touch with a resident who wants to provide independent housing opportunities for children with disabilities that are aged out of the system. Mr. Lewis also talked about how communities are providing more age restricted or 55+ housing but could consider more disability and affordable options. Ms. Huchler stated that the new Prickett Preserve has rentals on the first floor that they say are accessible. However, many people with disabilities would prefer a higher floor for safety. Also, we would encourage builders to not only provide access to the building but think about providing units that might have larger doorways, roll-in showers, etc. Builders need to go above and beyond the required building ordinances to provide more opportunities for people with disabilities to live in those communities.

GOALS

Continue to review design plans for accessibility into buildings.

Community Outreach/Events - look for different ways to create awareness of the DAB.

- Attend any LMT Community Events

- Support Parks and Rec scheduled events – 5 K Anyway, Playground grand opening

- Partner with the Center for Independent Living (CIL) on some events

- Attend appropriate events with Rep. Perry Warren.

- Sponsor a sensory friendly Halloween party for children of all abilities.

Work with Parks and Rec on marketing plan

Update ADA Transition plan and address short term needs/enhancements

Seek financial sponsorship of shade at the Secret Garden and extension of the 5-Mile Woods boardwalk.

MEETING SCHEDULE

February 2025 cancelled. Next meeting March 12, 2025 at the Township Building meeting room.

MEETING ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Zolfo moved and Ms. Huchler seconded to adjourn, approved unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 7:01 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Cynthia Lang
Secretary, Disability Advisory Board