

**PLAINFIELD ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES FOR March 4, 2026**

Members Present: Mitch Pauley, Dawn Fancher, Alicia Weiss. **Members Absent:** Mary Lane.
Guests: Susan Edgerton, Laurie Vetch. Allison Joyal.

Call meeting to order: Called to order at 5:30

Review, propose changes, adopt agenda: agenda adopted

Review/edit/approve minutes of draft minutes of February 4, 2026: minutes approved and adopted

Public Comment: None (*don't have recording, did we have public comment?*)

Senior Accessibility and Needs Discussion: reviewed the agenda for their meeting and welcomed guests Susan Edgerton and Laurie Vitch, who expressed interest in addressing accessibility needs for elderly and disabled residents. The committee discussed a survey through the Senior Center to identify unmet needs among seniors and others with disabilities. Laurie suggested implementing a screen for future Town Meetings to assist those with hearing difficulties; she had also shared this request with a member of the select board.

Town Meeting Accessibility Improvements

The Committee discussed accessibility issues at the recent Town Meeting, including the lack of a publicized Zoom link, the fact that virtual attendance was limited to audio only (and thus lacked an automatic captioning capacity), and the need for better communication and preparation in the future. Members agreed there is a need to be more proactive in communicating with the Select Board and town office about accessibility measures for next year's Town Meeting. The Committee also discussed the importance of providing plain language versions of meeting materials and identifying in advance assistive technologies to ensure people with disabilities can participate fully. Mitch Pauley and Allison Joyal both expressed interest in promoting accessibility and inclusivity at Town Meetings.

New Committee Member

Allison Joyal expressed interest in formally joining the Committee. In addition to being a Plainfield resident, Allison is the Meals on Wheels Coordinator at the Vermont Center for Independent Living (VCIL).

Disability Voting Rights Advocacy Update

Alicia provided an update on RevUp Vermont, a national disability voting rights organization. She explained that RevUp Vermont was formed in response to frustrations with the Act 133 Working Group convened by the Secretary of State's Office, which despite its charge, stopped far short of addressing state voting law provisions that effectively exclude many people with disabilities from fully participating in all town elections. Alicia outlined recent activities, including a press release on coordinated with the introduction of Senate bill 298, which does not address disability rights protections. Disability Rights Vermont, the Human Rights Commission and other organizations have advocated since the bill's introduction for amendments to address disability voter exclusion in the legislation.

Vermont Voting Rights Act Discussion

The group further discussed the status of S.298, the Vermont Voting Rights Act, which is currently in the GovOps Committee and faces resistance to amendments, particularly from the Secretary of State's office, which exerts significant influence over a bill's passage.. The Act was modeled after Virginia's legislation which focused on race and ethnicity. Many states are rushing to pass similar bills due to concerns about federal voting suppression. The group acknowledged the need for proactive and visible efforts to make changes on a town-by-town basis for the present, as major amendments are unlikely in 2026 due to election-year politics.

Town Meeting Attendance: Current vs, Historical Factors

The Committee discussed accessibility issues at Town Meetings, with Dawn and Allison sharing personal experiences of difficulty accessing the current venue. They noted that Town Meetings primarily attract seniors and those with flexible work schedules, while many working-age residents cannot attend. The discussion highlighted that the current system, which limits participation to about 30 people, no longer serves the modern population effectively. The group also touched on the historical context of Town Meetings and their evolution over time, acknowledging that the current format was designed for a different era when fewer people were eligible to vote and many of those who were eligible were either self- or locally- employed, thus able to attend.

Town Meeting Location Alternatives Discussion

The group discussed potential alternatives to the current Town Meeting location, which lacks adequate accessible parking and dimensions that make it difficult for persons with mobility aids to navigate voting and seating areas. Mitch suggested Goddard as a possible alternative. Dawn mentioned that some people had previously complained about meetings at Goddard, but the group

agreed it was worth investigating further. The need for more accessible parking and a safe crossing near the current Town Hall was revisited, for both governance meetings and other town events. The conversation concluded with Dawn expressing some hesitation about putting too much energy into changing the meeting location, as they want to focus on improving Town Meetings overall.

Timeline for Planning and Public Outreach

The committee reviewed the timeline document Dawn had created, agreeing to move some events one month ahead. Dawn noted they had only produced a rough draft. The document needs to be properly formatted with headers and other accessibility remediation.

Survey Project Timeline Planning

The group discussed and adjusted a timeline for various tasks related to a survey and advocacy project. It reviewed the schedule, with Alicia offering to gather materials from the Jericho process in May. Mitch shared his availability, noting he has more time in early June and July due to his work schedule. The group agreed to compile survey results in July and write a report in August. They also decided to identify advocates and allies earlier in the process, potentially in May or June. Dawn mentioned they would finalize proposed articles in September instead of October. The team agreed to review the timeline in more detail in the coming months to ensure smooth progress.

Public Meeting Planning and Voting

The group discussed plans for upcoming public meetings, with Dawn mentioning potential meetings in October and January. Despite the existence of secure and accessible technologies that would allow hybrid Town Meeting voting, the Secretary of State's office currently prohibits their implementation. Alicia agreed to research voter turnout data and compile information on floor votes. She also volunteered to research state requirements for changing Town Meeting Day voting for the Committee's next meeting

Town Website Navigation

It was agreed to request that a link to the Accessibility Advisory Committee's page be added to Plainfield Government landing page under "Town Government Meetings:" to assist in navigation.

Set date/time for next meeting: Next meeting will be held at 5:30 on April 1st.

Adjourn meeting: Meeting adjourned at 7:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Mitch Pauley