

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MAKEFIELD
DISABILITY ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES
June 11, 2025

A meeting of the Disability Advisory Board of the Township of Lower Makefield was held at the Township building on June 11, 2025. Chairperson Huchler opened the meeting at 6:04 pm.

Those present:

Lisa Huchler, Chairperson (in person)
Abbey Yeatts, Vice Chairperson (zoom)
Michele Williams, Member (zoom)
Kierstyn Zolfo, Member (in person)
Larisa Gambale, Member (in person)
Jody Smith, Alternate (in person)

John Lewis, Supervisor Liaison (in person)

APPROVAL OF THE MAY 14, 2025 MINUTES

Ms. Zolfo moved, Ms. Yeatts seconded, and the May 14, 2025 meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

NEW MEMBER INTRODUCTION AND DUTIES

Ms. Huchler stated the Disability Advisory Board (DAB) has a full quorum with 5 primary members and 1 alternate. Larisa Gambale joins as a member and Jody Smith as an alternate. We welcome their experience and future contributions as members of the DAB.

Ms. Huchler explained the protocol of an alternate as explained by Township Manager, David Kratzer. If the 5 primary members are present, the alternate does not contribute to the votes or participate in deliberations. If a primary member is absent or disqualified, the chair will publicly designate the alternate member to serve in a primary member capacity at the beginning of the meeting. Ms. Williams said she would be willing to step down as a member and become an alternate, however, Ms. Huchler explained that only the LMT Board of Supervisors can appoint members and make changes.

The Board also thanks the township for the 1 day passes in appreciation to all volunteers on Boards and Committees.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment this week.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

At the last meeting, we were discussing what information regarding Emergency Management and alerts should be included in the DAB brochure. Ms. Huchler asked about Smart911 and what

the difference is between registering for Smart911 or the new Handle with Care Registry. Upon further research, there seems to be confusion on Smart911. Ms. Huchler reached out to the LMT Police department and they were not aware of this program. They only use the new Handle with Care Registry to provide important info to 911 operators that would be given out to First Responders when they receive a call. Members had comments and questions such as: Ms. Williams was going to do this but was not sure if information would be safeguarded. Ms. Yeatts asked if information for 2 people could be on one cell number. Ms. Smith read that it is available in 40 states per press release. Ms. Zolfo suggested this is a program that runs in the background of the 911 system. Ms. Huchler has reached out to Bucks County Emergency Communications Department to discuss and is waiting to hear back. Mr. Lewis provided the Directors name and also reminded everyone that the 911 Dispatchers are always looking for help in their department. We will definitely include the 2 important forms below and gather more info on the Smart911 program and report back at the next meeting.

Description of Handle with Care Registry

The Handle with Care program is a multifaceted approach to effectively serve those with mental health and/or special needs. This program implements a special needs registry while giving focus to training officers on mental health/special needs response. Handle with Care Registry, a registry has been created for Lower Makefield residents that allows one to submit information which can be used to aid law enforcement when engaging with those who have mental health / special needs. Once collected, this information would be readily available to first responders upon dispatch. The program formerly required registering in person or via mail, but now registrations may be made on-line. Those interested in submitting mental health/special needs information can do so by using the following link:

<https://bucks.crimewatchpa.com/lowermakefieldtwppd/17384/slideshows/handle-care-registry>

Ms. Huchler noted that the LMT website should remove all links to the old Special Needs Premise form that has now been replaced by the Handle with Care registry. She will contact the Township to update.

Description of Blue Envelope Program

The Blue Envelope Program provides packets where people with autism and related disorders can keep their license, registration and other key documents. The envelopes feature tips for both drivers and officers to help navigate the encounter.

Police departments across the country have introduced the program in recent years to improve interactions between law enforcement and people with neurological difficulties.

Some people with autism struggle to communicate, and those challenges can be made worse in scenarios such as an unexpected traffic stop because of fear or anxiety, sensory overload from bright lights or sounds, and other factors.

The envelopes also remind officers to expect behaviors associated with autism, such as repetitive motions and avoiding eye contact, and to give simple, clear instructions.

Anyone can pick up an envelope at the police station lobby at 1100 Edgewood Rd.

UPDATE BROCHURE

Ms. Zolfo had sent the updated brochure to all committee members for review. Once we have information on the Smart911 program we will decide if we need to include it in our brochure.

Ms. Zolfo will put that information along with a QR code sending people to the lmt.org

Disability Advisory Board webpage. <https://www.lmt.org/government/boards-commissions/disability-advisory-board/>

We will continue to work on the brochure and will approve the final version at the August meeting. Ms. Zolfo said she will add the pictures/graphics once all of the wording and QR code has been updated.

Ms. Gambale asked where the brochure is available and how it would be distributed to the public. Ms. Huchler stated that we have these available at community events we may attend, placed in the lobby of the township building and community centers, etc.

We also can use the new employee at the township, Kellie Frain, to post information about the DAB to LMT Social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn. She would be happy to post any specific items for the DAB on the official pages.

Ms. Yeatts said that the LMT Police have information about their programs on the police website and social feeds. Ms. Zolfo suggested the township put notifications out on a repeat cycle alerting residents to these important topics.

EVENTS

Disability Fair

Ms. Huchler reached out to Rep. Perry Warren's office about hosting a Disability Fair similar to the one Ms. Yeatts and Ms. Huchler attended in the north part of the county. The event was well attended and was very informative. Many government agencies and support organizations currently providing services for adults and children with disabilities and their caregivers attended but most had offices in the Doylestown area. Will follow up and hope to be able to have vendors attend that provide services in the lower part of the county.

5 K Color Fun Run for Accessibility will be held Sunday, September 28, 2025 for all interested in volunteering and supporting. This is the fifth year for this event. A portion of the funds raised will be allocated to the ADA Transition Plan. Parks and Rec is asking the DAB members for volunteers. Reminder that the color thrown at stations is elective for runners.

Ms. Smith asked if we have a table there. Ms. Huchler said that the event is only a 5k run or walk and no vendors attend.

POTENTIAL GRANT UPDATES

Ms. Yeatts receives information from the Temple Institute on Disabilities (Adaptive Technology Center for our area) and includes many potential grant opportunities. Ms. Yeatts came across an "Accessible growing Microgrant"

<https://disabilities.temple.edu/programs-services/health-equity/food-justice/pennsylvania-accessible-growing-microgrant>. This grant is to help make gardens and growing spaces in Pennsylvania more accessible for everyone. Funds can be used for tools, renovations, and other accessibility improvements.

Ms. Gambale thought this would be a great project for a youth committee or students. We discussed an opportunity for us to apply and potentially use towards a future "scout" project. We would like to see if there is anyone with a disability in the community that has an interest in gardening and would benefit from installing a raised typed of gardening bed. Ms. Williams asked if we should reach out to the LMT seniors.

Ms. Yeatts presented information on a grant available through The American Academy of Dermatology at our last meeting. She was thinking this would be a good fit to apply for shade structures at the Secret Garden and Memorial Park. The grant would be up to \$8,000 and does not have a matching requirement. <https://www.aad.org/public/public-health/shade-structure-grants>

Ms. Huchler looked into the grant and upon reading the information it states you must have a sun-safety program in place for at least one year prior to application. Ms. Yeatts said their website gives many ideas on how to implement this. Ms. Yeatts volunteered to spearhead this project and will look into a public health campaign. Ms. Zolfo said she could contribute some media or various types of publications that could be used to get the word out about sun-safety and show a continued effort of outreach.

We also sent an email to Monica Tierney to see if we would be eligible since it says for not-for-profit groups. Will reach out to a Dermatologist in Yardley once we get confirmation regarding our status to assist us in the campaign for sun protection.

LMT PROJECT UPDATES

PECO Green Region Open Space Program

(May 13, 2025) – In celebration of the 20th anniversary of the [PECO Green Region Open Space Program](#), PECO has announced that 20 municipalities and nonprofits across southeastern Pennsylvania will receive more than \$200,000 in grants to preserve, protect, and improve open space in the region. Not sure how much LMT has received as part of this grant.

Funding will help extend the accessible path/boardwalk recently opened. Parks and Rec will work with Public Works to determine a timeline. Potential work to be completed in the fall of 2025.

Ms. Smith said she was not aware of the accessible walkway at 5-Mile woods. Could the Newsletter include more detail for 5-mile woods section to say Handicapped Accessible Boardwalk and maybe the length of the accessible pathway.

Parks and Rec was working with a pool member to teach Adaptive Swim lessons to special needs swimmers at the LMT Pool. They are in the very initial phases of this discussion. Have to see if staff can be trained ahead of time or if it is better to contract out these services.

Ms. Yeats gave an update and does not believe it will begin this year since this is organized by one person. She will be meeting again with Parks and Rec soon.

Would this be something that our new members might be able to help out with next year? Start looking into this program in late winter to see if the organization that runs it may be able to do training prior to the pool opening. Need to also understand the funding of the program, training, and requirements before starting the process.

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.

Some of the updates we sent regarding improvements/maintenance is needed immediately. Ms. Huchler will send an email to Monica Tierney to go over these issues. We understand some of the larger, long-term projects will take time to get funding however, some of the maintenance issues should addressed now.

Ms. Huchler spoke to Jim Majewski about Macclesfield Field. The Township was working on a long-term plan but need to address some of the handicapped parking issues sooner. He said that to stripe spots would not be a problem. Will follow up.

BUILDING PLAN REVIEW

Prickett Plan Updates -DAB will continue to review plans as they come in for other retail establishments.

Update on Handicapped Accessible Parking at new section of Prickett. It was noted that the parking lot had been striped and the 2 handicapped spots were located in an area far from the entrances to the stores at this location. Pictures were sent to the LMT Community Development Director, Jim Majewski and he will continue to follow up.

Comments were made about the path from spots not any longer than other areas. Ms. Huchler said this was not relevant and sited the ADA guidelines:

In parking lots or garages, accessible parking spaces must be located on the shortest accessible route to the accessible entrance. An accessible route is the path a person with a disability takes to enter and move through a building or facility.

OLD BUSINESS

Marketing Plan Revisions- make sure we stay in the loop to help with a strategy for better outreach and education. Goal would be to ensure individuals with disabilities are aware of and educated about available services. There has not been any further discussion regarding an official marketing plan.

NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Zolfo asked if there is anything she can do about the length of time it took her HOA community to add a handicapped parking space. She said she asked them 3 months prior to moving in and then it took more than 8 months after. The spot also was not the closest to her residence.

She asked Ms. Huchler if there is ADA Guidance on this. The ADA law does apply to places of public accommodation, not usually private communities. However, if an area of your HOA Community is used for the general public it should be handicapped accessible or in compliance with ADA guidelines.

Ms. Huchler said we receive a few inquiries each year concerning these types of issues in private communities and the best way to handle is to work with the HOA directly. Start with the Property Manager, then contact the Board members, attend meetings, etc. HOA Boards will usually work with homeowners but it may take longer than expected. Ms. Zolfo asked if she could use our committees name in correspondence to her community. Ms. Huchler said we would not be involved but she could reference her position on the DAB and express her concern for others that may move in and need a special accommodation. She wants to emphasize that a shorter timeframe would be helpful to someone with a disability and they should review their procedures and prioritize accommodations necessary.

MEETING SCHEDULE

Next meeting August 13, 2025 at 6:00 pm at the Township Building meeting room.
July 2025 meeting cancelled.

MEETING ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Zolfo moved and Ms. Williams seconded to adjourn, approved unanimously.
Meeting adjourned at 7:14 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Lisa Huchler
Chair, Disability Advisory Board