



OBSERVER CORPS REPORT

MARBLEHEAD DISABILITIES COMMISSION - December 11, 2024

LWVM Observer – Nancy Powell

Members Present: Laurie Blaisdell, Mara Darty-Rocco, Briggete Duffy, Amy Hirschcron, Gail Mack, Samantha Marino

Members Absent: Cheryl LaLonde, Adreea Mountain

Guests Present: Don Morgan-Marblehead Conservancy

1. Eagle Scout Project

Don Morgan of the Marblehead Conservancy joined tonight's meeting. He gave an overview of a planned Eagle Scout project that involves building a four-foot-wide stoned dust pathway leading to Joseph Brown Pond from Barry Road and a viewing platform at the Pond's edge. He is seeking feedback from the Commission regarding ADA compliance. Ms. Hirschcron cited regulations from Chapter 10 of the Outdoor Developed Area section of the US-ADA which she emailed to Mr. Morgan.

2. Update Mass Office of Disability Grant

The Commission has officially been awarded a \$92,028 MoD grant that corresponds with the Devereaux Beach ADA upgrades the MDC had applied for. The Town Administrator will follow up with the Commission regarding next steps once it has been finalized by vote. Ms. Hirschcron will request a copy of the grant application in order to review what renovations are included.

3. Variance Application- 1 Atlantic Avenue

The owner of this property is requesting a variance that would allow construction of an accessible entrance at the back of the restaurant. The building is located directly on the sidewalk/street, making it difficult to build a ramp at the main entrance. The Commission has concerns regarding the narrow width of the alley that would lead to the back entrance, noting that the State AAB (Architectural Access Board) which develops and enforces regulations designed to make public buildings accessible and safe for use by people with disabilities will decide whether or not to grant a variance in this case.

4. Townwide Meeting Accessibility

Ms. Blaisdell spoke with the town's Facilities Director who explained that the new computer projection system used at Town Meeting has numerous font sizes available. In prior years, the text on slides was small and difficult to read. This will be corrected for Town Meeting 2025. Ms. Hirschcron noted that, by law, a public meeting attended by 50+ people requires an amplification system to be in place. Of the four options typically used, she believes an FM system would be the most appropriate for the town's needs. And, since 25% of FM receivers at Town Meeting must be compatible with hearing aids, she roughly estimates the town needing approximately 27 receivers at a total cost upwards of \$2500. Ms. Mack will connect with the individuals responsible for the sound system used during town meeting to determine what specific system is used so compatible receivers can be researched.

Ms. Mack drafted a letter for the Chair to send to the School Committee to ensure that accessibility (closed captioning) is integrated into their meetings. When the 2025 Town Meeting notice is sent out, Commission members agree that local newspapers should be asked to include a notice indicating that accommodations will be made available and the town ADA coordinator should be provided prior notice. Ms Hirschcron noted ADA law requires that the town ensure effective communication (closed captioning) is available for all public meetings as the lack of it could be considered obstruction.

5. Website and Facebook

Ms. Mack continues to work on the Commission's website. She reviewed the recommendations from the town's ADA report and plans to connect with the town's website manager to determine if the Commission is allowed to place a link on the town's website directing users to the Commission's new page (potentially via Google Builder).

6. 139 Pleasant Street follow-up

Ms. Blaisdell reached out to the AAB asking for an update on this property but has not received a response.

7. Year in Review

Ms. Blaisdell offered a review of the happenings of the Commission over the past year including new members joining, some members retiring, a review of the ADA Collins Center report, working to make accessibility improvements at several commercial establishments, an accessible Harbormaster's ramp installation, a MOD grant awarded for Devereaux Beach upgrades, guidance in making Abbot Library's ramp ADA compliant.

Next meeting: 1/8/25