



OBSERVER CORPS REPORT

Marblehead Disabilities Commission

February 12, 2025

LWVM Observer: Nancy Powell

Members Present: Laurie Blaisdell (Chair), Mara Dartly-Rocco (remote), Briggette Duffy, Amy Hirschcron (remote), Samantha Marino, (remote), Andrea Mountain (remote)

Members Absent: Gail Mack

Guests Present: Logan Casey, Donna Cotterell, Joanna Rose

Update Mass Office of Disability Grant

The Commission has been awarded a \$92,028 grant earmarked for Devereaux Beach ADA upgrades. Town Sustainability Coordinator, Logan Casey, provided an update. The grant will cover items such as: building a new ramp and replacing wood decking to improve restaurant access, installing heavy duty portable beach access mats to enable easy access to the water and the restrooms for wheelchair users and strollers, adjusting restroom amenities to meet ADA guidelines, improving access to the playground, installing signage for handicap parking, purchasing a new floating beach wheelchair. Mr. Casey noted the grant requires all updates be completed by June 30th. A town resident who was present remotely, suggested it would be helpful to ensure that doors to the bathrooms have push-down handles which require less fine motor dexterity turn-knobs.

Disabled Parking at Magic Hat

Ms. Blaisdell accompanied Todd Bloodgood (MPS Facilities Director) on a walk-thru of the Magic Hat Thrift Shop at the Veterans Middle School to determine the feasibility of creating an accessible entrance. They concluded the upgrade would require the elimination of three parking spaces in order to make room for a ramp and van turnaround. The doors leading to the shop would need to have electronic door openers. Further, the shop interior presents a challenge for wheelchair users as its narrow aisles would make managing corners, turning around, and general maneuvering difficult.

139 Pleasant Street

This project has continued to be out of compliance with commercial building accessibility requirements. Ms. Blaisdell was informed in writing by the State Architectural Access Board that the owners have submitted a revised plan and the AAB will conduct a hearing on the matter on 4/7/25. The Disability Commission will send a representative to the hearing.

Website/Facebook Management

Some members have noticed an uptick in traffic to the Disabilities Commission FB page. Ms. Blaisdell suggested one way to increase awareness would be to regularly post the monthly meeting date/time/agenda.

New Business

Just prior to today's meeting, Ms. Blaisdell was informed that new owners of 1 Atlantic Ave (formerly Le Bistro Café) have been asked to submit architectural drawings of proposed renovations noting that the entrance might not be compliant with accessibility regulations. The building is located directly on the sidewalk making it difficult to accommodate a ramp at the main entrance. The owner has requested a variance to allow construction of a separate accessible entrance at the back of the restaurant. The Commission is concerned about the narrow width of the alley that would lead to the back entrance. The AAB, 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.

Resignation

Cheryl LaLonde has resigned from the Commission. Members expressed gratitude for her service and the time she has spent dedicated to its mission.