



OBSERVER CORPS REPORT

Marblehead Disabilities Commission - February 14, 2024
(Hybrid Meeting)

LWVM Observer: Nancy Powell

Members Present: Laurie Blaisdell (Chair), Dee Cuffe, Briggete Duffy, Amy Hirschcron (remote), Ed Lang (remote)

Members Absent: Cheryl LaLonde, Andrea Mountain

Guests Present: Kyle Wiley

1. Review Marblehead ADA Report

The Commission has found a possible solution to the problem of contractors who occasionally neglect to address ADA regulations prior to starting a new construction project and then must go through a costly and time-consuming rebuilding process in order to comply. Ms. Blaisdell shared a document she drafted based on one the City of Cambridge has developed called "Steps to Building a Permit" that delineates how accessibility standards would be incorporated into the building permit process and how accessibility guidelines will be enforced. Those applying for building permits for new commercial projects or renovations which cost more than \$100,000, for example, must follow ADA guidelines. The commercial permit link will be found on the Town website and the term "Accessibility" will be listed on the permit procedure in ViewPoint.

Ms. Hirschcron will look at the ADA consultant's Transition Plan to see if involvement in the building permit process can or should be included in the job description for the Town's ADA coordinator. The MDC will review this at the next Commission meeting in March. It appears the ADA Transition Plan has yet to be made available to the public as promised. Ms. Hirschcron will create a list of action items that were to have been completed by now and offer support to the Town Administrator in implementing them as needed.

2. 139 Pleasant Street

Ms. Blaisdell received correspondence from Mr. William Joyce from the Architectural Access Board (AAC) in Boston. This project has continued to be out of compliance with accessibility requirements for a commercial building and has gone over the 30-day window without plans submitted. It is now officially gone beyond the date by which an appeal could have been filed. The AAC will determine if the owner will be fined and will update Ms. Blaisdell once a decision has been made. Commission members recommended Ms. Blaisdell write a letter urging the AAB to impose consequences for failing to comply with ADA regulations and ignoring requests made by the AAB as other businesses in Marblehead have actively been making strides in complying with ADA laws.

3. Follow-up Riptide ramp

The Riptide owner decided to comply with the ADA law (rather than seek a variance) and is installing ramps inside both the front and rear entrances. Ms. Blaisdell will reach out to local newspapers to let them know the Commission is beyond pleased. The hope is that other businesses will see that positive publicity will ensue when they make an effort to offer equal access to those with mobility impairments.

4. Follow-up Harbormaster Ramp

Ms. Blaisdell will engage a construction professional to correctly measure the new ramp between the State Street dock and the Harbormaster's office because initial rough measurements were calculated and it was found to be out of compliance. Ms. Blaisdell will compile the findings and forward them to the Harbormaster who has indicated he will rework as needed to meet ADA guidelines.