



OBSERVER CORPS REPORT

MARBLEHEAD DISABILITIES COMMISSION -September 18th, 2024

LWVM Observer: Nancy Powell

Members Present: Laurie Blaisdell (Chair), Mara Dartly-Rocco, Dee Cuffe, Bregette Duffy, Amy Hirschcron (remote), Gail Mack, Samantha Marino (remote) Members Absent: Cheryl LaLonde, Andrea Mountain

1. New board member, Mara Dartly-Rocco, was welcomed to the commission. She has been a health education teacher at Marblehead Veterans Middle School for seventeen years where her focus includes mental health, drug and alcohol education, character building and reducing stigma around disability.
2. Amy Hirschcron would like to step down from the Harbors Planning Implementation Committee and asked the Commission to elect a new representative to replace her. Laurie Blaisdell expressed interest and all members present agreed. A letter will be sent to the Committee notifying them of the change.
3. Gail Mack presented a letter she drafted for submission to the Select Board on behalf of the MDC urging that closed captioning be turned on at all public meetings. This is especially needed at School Committee and Select Board meetings because of sound interference at their locations. She noted the difficulty she has had connecting with meeting hosts to troubleshoot in real time to ask for closed captioning since the chat feature is typically disabled. She suggested the MDC could write instructions or provide any needed support to ensure this feature is consistently enabled during all public meetings.
4. Gail Mack has begun to review the MDC website and will begin the process of updating it and transitioning to a Google site over the coming months.
5. The Architectural Access Board sent a letter to MDC explaining that the building at 39 Pleasant Street now plans to install a vertical platform lift and will be submitting a request for a variance to address barriers to access for persons with disabilities. Laurie Blaisdell will keep board members updated as to the variance hearing outcome.

6. Laurie Blaisdell was invited to a planning review at the Lee Mansion brick kitchen (157 Pleasant Street) which is undergoing renovation/restoration with a planned opening next spring. The entrance for all visitors will be located on the side of the building and it will be wheelchair accessible.

7. Laurie Blaisdell was informed that the Architectural Access Board's permitting process now includes a checkbox for accessibility to ensure compliance with ADA requirements when an application for a building permit is submitted. This feature will add another level of scrutiny for the building inspector in verifying adherence to accessibility standards.

8. Laurie Blaisdell has updated the Town website to reflect the MDC's current practice of holding their monthly meetings in a hybrid format.

9. Amy Hirschcron will follow up regarding a potential new playground at the site of the Gerry School. She will find out who to contact to ensure accessibility compliance and to see if the MDC should be involved in the planning process.