



OBSERVER CORPS REPORT

Marblehead Disabilities Commission

January 12, 2023

Observer: Nancy Powell

Members Present: Laurie Blaisdell, Katie Farrell, Amy Hirschcron (remote), Samantha Marino (remote), Andrea Mountain (remote)

Members Absent: Cheryl LaLonde, Ed Lang

1. Collins Institute Survey

At the December 22 MDC meeting, Representatives from the Collins Center, a state entity located at UMASS/Boston, presented an overview of a grant-funded ADA Transition Plan they are partnering with Town of Marblehead to develop. The plan includes getting public comment via a survey tool that was launched the first week in January 23 to look at problematic access issues in town. Commission members expressed concern that survey questions seek input only from those who are disabled or are providing direct care for someone with a disability thereby overlooking input from members of the community at large and possibly skewing results. Members of the Commission will review the survey and provide feedback to the Collins Institute as needed.

2. Sidewalk Parking

Ms Hirschcron raised concern about pedestrians having to move onto the street because of drivers who frequently park their cars on sidewalks around town. She noted this is especially dangerous for those with auditory, vision and mobility impairments. The police, when called, will ticket illegally parked cars but this doesn't seem to be a routine procedure they follow. Ms Blaisdell proposed inviting the police chief to a future meeting to discuss this issue and in addition seek more robust enforcement of handicap parking violations and ensure that cars are parked at least 20 feet from an intersection due to visibility concerns for pedestrians when crossing streets. Ms Hirschcron proposed increasing public and law enforcement awareness regarding this issue. Ms Blaisdell will contact local news outlets to see if a friendly reminder could be published that would highlight the sidewalk parking problem.

3. Future Projects

An open discussion brought forth the following ideas for the Commission to undertake in the coming year:

- Harbor planning ideas including a kayak launch and enhancing accessibility for community members who would like to swim.
- Provide remote access to Town Meeting as is in the works in several other municipalities in Massachusetts that seek to offer voting via biometrics/vetted remote voting companies.
- Increase the Commission's visibility by doing such things as tabling at Farmers' Market, reinstating MDC's "Accessibility Awards" for Town businesses, and creating a more active Facebook page.
- Revisit the map of accessible locations around town and ensure there is an ample supply available.
- Suggest the Post Office install a push button door opener outside of the building. The interior door has recently been made accessible.
- Increase awareness of Council on Aging wheelchair accessible bussing program for trips in town and to venues/appointments in neighboring communities.
- Invite Thatcher Kezer (Town Administrator) and Jenny Armini (State Rep) to future meetings.

Next Meeting:

February 9, 2003 @ 4:15pm