



OBSERVER REPORT

MARBLEHEAD DISABILITIES COMMISSION- January 13, 2022 – Via ZOOM
LWVM Observer – Nancy Powell

Members Present: Laurie Blaisdell (Chair), Katie Farrell, Sue Harris, Amy Hirschkron, Cheryl LaLonde, Ed Lang, Samantha Marino, Andrea Mountain

1. **Harbor Update:** The Commission has been working with the Harbors and Waters Board on plans to open up Marblehead Harbor to those with mobility impairments, including making boating accessible to all regardless of physical ability. Toward that end Amy reported she and Sue have completed their research on sling lifts (for boarding and disembarking from boats) that would be appropriate for installation at Tucker's Wharf. The cost of the most expensive option would be \$3,500 and it could be added to the Town insurance policy without incurring a premium increase. Input will be sought from a disabled sailor regarding viability of the plan before approaching the Harbormaster to get on the agenda for their next board meeting to seek approval and guidance for the project.

2. **Meeting with the Select Board:** Commission members plan to invite the BOS to a future meeting to address a variety of issues that impact the Town's disability community. Laurie presented several ideas to discuss including: clarifying the Commission's purpose as described in its Mission Statement; the importance of making sure all Town departments, boards, and commissions consult with the Commission about any new projects in order to insure ADA compliance and giving examples of Town projects that have gone forward without considering ADA

requirements and thereby necessitated making costly changes; and the need to educate department heads about ADA requirements. Laurie will send out a draft of her proposal for issues to address with the BOS. The Commission will continue this discussion at their next meeting.

3. **Town Map of Accessible Locations**: Sue reported on her meeting with Katherine Koch, the new Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce, regarding the idea of highlighting on both their annual Visitors' Guide and their website those businesses and points of interest that are wheelchair accessible. After discussion, and because the Guide includes only those Chamber members who have paid for an ad or listing, the Commission will consider two additional options—adding notations to the map available at the Town Information Booth, as well as creating a separate flyer with a complete listing of accessible businesses and public locations that could be inserted into the Guide and/or be made available at the Information Booth. Sue will follow up with Katherine about these options.

4. **139 Pleasant Street**: Laurie reported she received notice from the Architectural Access Board regarding this property whose owners have requested a variance to ADA requirements. A virtual hearing on this matter has been scheduled for February 7th at 11am. The Commission agreed to send another letter to the AAB detailing the history of this property and expressing opposition to the owners' variance request. Laurie, Sue and Amy will work on the letter and a script for Laurie in the event she is able to actively participate in the hearing.

5. **Brown School**: Laurie will follow up with Jeff Dougan (Massachusetts Office on Disability) about the status of ADA corrections that he identified on his site visit last fall.