



OBSERVER REPORT

MARBLEHEAD DISABILITIES COMMISSION October 14, 2021
LWVM Observer – Nancy Powell

Members Present: Laurie Blaisdell (Chair), Katie Farrell, Sue Harris, Amy Hirschkron, Andrea Mountain

Members Absent: Cheryl LaLonde, Ed Lang

Guests: James Ashton, Jocelyn Cook, Richard Ramos

139 Pleasant Street Laurie gave an update on this property. On June 15th 2021 the Zoning Board granted the owners' new request to rezone the property as mixed-use (commercial 1st floor/residential 2nd and 3rd floor). When the Disability Commission was notified of this, Sue contacted the Mass Office on Disability to clarify the status of a temporary variance granted to the owners in February 2019 which they later withdrew. If granted, the variance would have allowed the owners to avoid being required to make the first-floor commercial unit wheelchair accessible. Commissioners reported the situation to the Mass Access Architectural Board (MAAB). Laurie recently received a copy of a Stipulated Order issued by the MAAB to the owners that grants them 60 days to submit a request for a variance of 521 CMR 25.1 that requires an accessible entrance to a commercial space. The Commission decided to revisit once the notice of compliance or non-compliance is issued.

Harbor Access The Commission has been advocating for improvements that would make the public docks, piers, and gangways ADA compliant and give people with mobility impairments equal access to the harbor. Members reviewed a report prepared by Sue and Amy who made site visits to Village, Stramski, and Tucker's Wharf to assess and make recommendations for accessibility improvements. It was agreed that Sue, Amy, and Laurie will arrange a meeting

with Harbormaster, Mark Souza, to discuss their findings and suggest as a first step installing a Hoyer lift at Tucker's Wharf and thereby have a blueprint for including another lift at one of the two piers/docks on the Salem Harbor side of Marblehead. Laurie indicated the Harbormaster is amenable to making sure the waterfront is ADA compliant and accessible to all.

Guest, James Ashton, reported that the town has hired a consultant to create a Harbor Improvement Plan. The Board of Selectmen will announce a request for letters of interest from parties who wish to participate and work with the consultant to formulate the plan. Amy has been in touch with Town Administrator, Jason Silva, about this issue and will contact him again expressing the Commission's strong desire to be included on this committee. Guest, Jocelyn Cook, mentioned that, based on meetings of the Municipal Boot Camp being conducted by Silva, both the police chief and the fire chief have expressed interest in having the town purchase a Hoyer lift to be used in facilitating water rescues.

Brown School Laurie, Katie, and Cheryl recently toured the Brown School with Jeff Dougan and Ashley Santana of the Mass Office on Disability (MOD). Also attending were Owner/Project Manager, Brian Johnson; Gilbane Construction's John Roche; Marblehead Schools Facilities Director, Todd Bloodgood; and Associate Director of Student Services, Paula Donnelly. The ensuing MOD report found relatively few violations of the Architectural Access Board guidelines, among them the need to reconstruct a ramp leading to the stage in the cafeteria/auditorium. Gilbane Construction has agreed to correct all violations.

Sidewalk Repairs Laurie shared that the Town has received a \$25,000 grant to hire a consultant to develop an ADA Transition Plan. The Commission had been considering sponsoring an override to fund town-wide sidewalk repairs in order to remove barriers, but have now decided to wait until the Transition Plan has been developed. Laurie will reach out to Jason Silva to reinforce the importance of having input from the Disabilities Commission in creating the plan.

Other Business Amy raised concerns about the lack of sign language interpreters at Town Meeting. Commission members will try to be a presence at BOS meetings to provide updates on access issues and request remedies as needed.