



## OBSERVER REPORT

### **Marblehead Disabilities Commission**

March 9, 2023

LWVM Observer: Nancy Powell

Members Present: Laurie Blaisdell, Amy Hirschcron (remote), Ed Lang (remote), Samantha Marino (remote). Guests Present: Pamela Daly

Members Absent: Katie Farrell, Andrea Mountain, Cheryl LaLonde

#### 1. Invited guest, MPD Chief Dennis King, was welcomed to the meeting.

Commission members shared concerns about pedestrians having to move onto the street because of drivers who frequently park their cars on sidewalks or too close to corners or intersections. Ms. Hirschcron said this is especially dangerous for those with auditory, vision and mobility impairments. She noted that police, when called, will ticket illegally parked cars but this doesn't seem to be a routine procedure they follow.

Chief King explained there is selective enforcement around traffic and timed parking due to coverage needs at any given time during the day. He urges citizens with such concerns to call the MPD non-emergency line so that an officer could be dispatched to address the situation by speaking with the vehicle owner or ticketing the vehicle. He further stated that multiple calls are helpful and always appreciated. He explained that the department does not typically tow a vehicle unless the violation persists. Ms. Hirschcron proposed further steps to increase public and law enforcement awareness regarding this issue. Ms. Blaisdell will contact local news outlets to see if a friendly reminder could be published to highlight the sidewalk parking problem.

Chief King indicated that in 2022 MPD received over 700 parking violation calls and collected in excess of \$40,000 from parking citations. Ms. Blaisdell said that monies accrued from handicap parking citations (\$1,500 in 2022) could be used to fund training of MPD officers in responding effectively when people on the autism spectrum or those with communication or sensory disorders are involved.

Ms. Blaisdell expressed concern that crosswalk light signals do not appear to be in the sightline of drivers, with some lights having sunshields covering the actual walk lights. In addition, she pointed out that it is difficult for vehicles turning right on red to visualize people crossing in wheelchairs increasing the chance of a collision.

Mr. Lang wondered about the potential for vehicle accessibility to the lower sports fields at the High School. Chief King expressed that vehicle traffic on that road might create a hazard for pedestrians but promised to explore that further.

## 2. Magic Hat Thrift Shop

Ms. Mary Ann Dunn and Ms. Farrell had previously notified Ms. Blaisdell of an accessibility issue at the Magic Hat located at the Veterans Middle School. The shop has an entrance with a ramp but has neither a curb cut nor a handicapped parking space. A proposal was offered to move handicap access to another entry point that already exists in the building for use by people with mobility impairments. The Commission maintains that the shop should make the main entrance usable for all individuals for the sake of equity, and they have approached the school's facilities director who is interested in making this happen. This project is estimated to cost between \$3k-\$5k and would be paid for by the Magic Hat.

Next meeting: April 13, 2023 at 4:15pm -Abbott Public Library, 3 Brook Road and via ZOOM