



Observer Report

Marblehead Disability Commission
LWVM Observer. Nancy Powell
September 8, 2022 via ZOOM

Members Present: Laurie Blaisdell (Chair), Sue Harris, Amy Hirschcron, Cheryl LaLonde, Samantha Marino, Rich Ramos
Guests Present: Kyle Wiley

Town Warrant Article to Require Remote Access to Town Board/Committee Meetings

When a Warrant Article was brought to the 2022 Town Meeting to ensure the use of virtual platforms for all Board and Committee meetings, the Town voted to form a Remote Access Implementation Committee to bring about this change in the coming year. Members were appointed by Gary Speiss before his term as Moderator ended. Laurie reached out to (Chair) Jeff Shribman to request that at least one member of the Disability Commission be added to this Committee. At its first meeting on August 10th (with Laurie present and Amy participating via ZOOM) that request was granted, and Laurie will serve in that role. Amy noted that her ability to see, hear and participate at this meeting via ZOOM was not ideal. She suggested there should be someone monitoring the remote feed to insure those participating via ZOOM have equal access. Kyle Wiley expressed a commitment to getting the kinks out so that all participants are accommodated fully and equally.

Harbor Plan Working Group

Amy had volunteered to be the Commission's representative to the Harbor Plan Working Group which was created by the BOS to identify ways to expand and improve public access to the waterfront while preventing displacement of fishing activities. This includes insuring ADA-compliant access to Marblehead Waters for small sail, motor and paddle vessels. Amy cannot participate because the meetings are held in-person at the BOS Room at Abbott Hall with no remote access to their meetings available. Rich or Laurie will attend the next meeting on September 14th.

Chamber of Commerce Award

Laurie noted that The Marblehead Chamber of Commerce will honor the Disabilities Commission at its 70th Annual Meeting and Awards Celebration on September 27th 5:30-8:30pm at the Corinthian Yacht Club. Laurie and Sue will attend.

Correspondence with Marblehead Municipal Light Department regarding telephone poles blocking sidewalks

Laurie and others have noticed several areas in town where telephone poles have been installed within sidewalks and curb cuts, forcing wheelchair users to move into the street in order to pass. She raised concerns about this with Light Department General Manager, Joe Kowalik, who indicated sidewalks in these areas will be widened where feasible or the light poles will be relocated in order to rectify the problems.

Discussion about barriers in Town with Department Heads

Laurie met with the Building Commissioner to discuss the need for all relevant Town Departments to consult with the Disability Commission for review of ADA guidelines before permits are issued for new commercial projects. This offer was welcomed and going forward, she will be invited to all inter-departmental meetings. Commission members discussed the need to form a plan to ensure that all Town Boards and Commissions consult with the Disability Commission when they are in the process of developing, approving, or implementing any new (or changes to) structures or programs.

Update on meeting with Park and Rec

The Commission has been making a concerted effort to advocate for improved disabled access to public parks in Town. Toward that end, Laurie met with Linda Rice-Collins who reported that the Parks and Recreation Department has significant changes in the works at Stramski's including construction of a concrete ramp with double handrails to provide disabled access to the water. Wheelchair access at Hobb's Field has also been improved. Rich reported that the ramp at Devereaux Beach that leads to the snack bar is in poor repair and cannot be safely navigated by wheelchair users. In addition, the mobile mat, ramp and boardwalk that provide access to the Devereaux Beach playground have suffered from a lack of maintenance. Laurie said that a \$50k grant from the Massachusetts Office on Disability could be used to address these issues.

Update on Brochures

One thousand copies of the brochure listing accessible locations in Marblehead were printed and distributed. Sue has been monitoring supplies at the Marblehead Chamber of Commerce and their Information Booth, the Abbot Hall Gift Shop, the Community Center and Abbot Library and will restock as needed.

Annual Report to the Town

Laurie is working on the Commission's Annual Report which will be submitted for inclusion in the Annual Report of the Town.

ADA Coordinator Position

Commission members discussed the importance of instituting an ADA Coordinator position for the Town. Laurie noted that Kyle Wylie currently assumes this role, but given the myriad other responsibilities of her position, she could use support. The ADA Coordinator position could be folded

into the Building Department and be a more active role as is the case in many other cities and towns in the state.

Sue Harris announced her resignation from the Commission after eight years of service effective immediately.

Next meeting: Thursday October 13, 2022 at 4:15pm.