



Observer Report

Marblehead Disabilities Commission – June 9, 2022

LWVM Observer: Nancy Powell

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

1. Harbor Matters Update

Harbor Lift: The Commission has been working with the Harbor and Waters Board on plans to open up Marblehead Harbor to those with mobility challenges including by making boating available to all regardless of physical ability. After getting valuable input from Harbormaster Mark Souza, a manual lift will soon be installed at State Street Dock. The Commission approved plans for a Dedication Ceremony to be held at the site on June 25th at 10:00am. Invitees will include Town officials and local news media, and will be open to all. At the event, Donna Rice, who is helping with publicity for the lift, will distribute 100 buttons with a logo design gifted to the Commission by a friend of Amy's.

Harbor Working Group: Laurie attended the May 16th public meeting of this group, the purpose of which was to seek comment on priorities for the harbor. Previously, at the Working Group Consultant's request, Amy developed a list of questions relevant to the interests/concerns of the disabilities community. The meeting was not available remotely making it less likely that people with mobility challenges would be able to attend. Amy will check whether a ZOOM public meeting will be held as was previously agreed to by the Working Group's Consultant.

2. Town Map of Accessible Locations

The Commission has been working with the Marblehead Chamber of Commerce to create a brochure that assesses points of interest in Marblehead for wheelchair accessibility. Sue reported that the brochure is almost complete and thanked members for their feedback. A thousand copies of the brochure will be printed and

distributed by the Chamber of Commerce at its office and Information Booth. Sam suggested making the brochure available on the Commission website and perhaps creating a QR Code link to the site that will also be posted at the Chamber locations.

3. Disabilities Commission Future meetings

Laurie reminded the Commission that the Open Meeting Law exception that allows fully remote meetings expires this year in July. Although the law allows Disabilities Commissions in Massachusetts to vote to make all meetings virtual, it requires that the meeting Chair be present at a physical location so that members of the public who wish to can attend in person. Laurie agreed to pursue finding a location that will allow future meetings to be available in a hybrid format.

4. Disabilities Commission Logo

Sam reached out to some local school contacts about having students design a logo, but has had limited success to date. Amy brought a sample logo designed by a friend who is willing to give the Commission permission to use it in any manner it chooses. Commission members approved use of this logo.

5. Village Plaza Accessibility

Village Plaza has a wheelchair ramp that leads to the second floor but it is located behind a door with no signage to indicate an accessible entrance. Laurie sent a letter to the owners of Village Plaza making three requests: that they install a sign on the door to the ramp to the upper level indicating that it is an accessible entrance, that they install a notice of the location of this ramp at the base of all stairs leading to the second level, and that they notify all Plaza tenants of the availability and location of the ramp. She has yet to receive a response and will follow up.

6. New Business

Devereux Beach Playground: Rich received an email, copied to the Park & Rec Director among others, regarding the need for an accessible swing at the playground. Laurie indicated there is already an accessible swing on site. The Commission will leave this concern for the Park & Rec Director to handle for now.

Fort Sewall Opening: Ed said that the renovated Fort Sewall official opening will be on June 18th from 12-2pm. Laurie encouraged Commission members to attend.