



## Observer Corps Report

Marblehead Disability Commission: January 14, 2021 via Zoom LWVM Observer: Nancy Powell  
Members Present: Laurie Blaisdell (Chair), Katie Farrell, Preston Ford, Sue Harris, Amy Hirschcron, Cheryl LaLonde, Andrea Mountain, Kyle Wylie Guest: Richard Ramos

**Accessible Massachusetts Act (H4425):** Commission members noted that this bill, currently pending in the House Ways and Means Committee, has the potential to create accessible housing, spaces, and workplaces in cities and towns throughout the Commonwealth. Efforts to reach out to Rep Lori Ehrlich and Jeff Dougan (Mass Office on Disability) and invite them to meet and discuss how the bill could have a positive impact locally have been unsuccessful. Laurie will send a third invite via email in hopes they will attend a March Commission meeting. Members will be prepared to discuss:

- Possible sources of funding to improve sidewalks in town.
- Regulations that allow restaurants that are inaccessible to “grandfather” new leaseholders who can remain out of compliance with ADA. (Members noted this is a difficult time for restaurants, however, this issue is longstanding and could perhaps be remediated by exploring grants and tax incentives in order to alleviate financial burden on owners.)
- Changes nearby communities have implemented to make their harbors/waterfront areas more accessible to people with physical challenges.

### Website

- Discussion centered on ways the website could get information out to the public regarding emergency preparedness, Covid vaccinations, snow removal, enrolling in Fire Department’s Disability Indicator Program, and promoting disability-friendly (HP symbol) places/businesses in Marblehead.
- Members expressed interest in collaborating with other Commissions whose interests overlap with those of the disability community including the **Conservation Commission** (whose volunteers maintain trails) to bring awareness of difficulty navigating in a wheelchair on surfaces that have been covered by woodchips and **Sustainable Marblehead** and its Transportation Group and Tree Committee who work on safe streets and sidewalk initiatives.

Date Change for next meeting: February 28<sup>th</sup>.