



OBSERVER REPORT

Marblehead Disabilities Commission

October 8, 2020 4:15PM via Zoom

Present: Laurie Blaisdell (Chair), Katie Farrell, Preston Ford, Sue Harris, Amy Hirschkron, Cheryl LaLonde, Ed Lang, Samantha Marino, Andrea Mountain, Rev. Tim Shotmeyer

Guest: Rob Dever, Highway Department

The meeting opened with request by the Chair to approve minutes of last meeting January 23, 2020.

New commission appointee, Amy Hirschkron, was introduced.

New Highway Department Director, Ed Dever, an invited guest, discussed the need for sidewalk repairs throughout town. Asked about the possibility of an override to fund this, he indicated the work will be an ongoing priority for the Highway Department. The department will need to take a methodical approach, committing to redoing adjacent sidewalks wherever they “touch a road”. This means widening sidewalks, adding curb cuts and enhancing pedestrian crossings where feasible and appropriate. He has already begun to collaborate with the Town Administrator, Water and Sewer, the Engineering Department and Tree Warden on a long-term approach to a long-term problem. There is grant funding already in place to add 36 handicapped ramps in the next few months in priority locations around town. A grant from the Department of Transportation will fund a variety of safe mobility initiatives.

An update was given on the status of the Rail Trail redesign which will be aimed at making the entire trail safer and more user-friendly for wheelchair users as well as cyclists, runners and walkers. Some recent small-scale improvements have already made the terrain easier to navigate by wheelchair according to commission member, Cheryl LaLonde.

Ed Lang gave an update on the redesign of Fort Sewall which has been funded by personal contributions, \$270,000 of which are earmarked for bringing the restrooms, walkways and ramps into ADA compliance and will give full access to those with mobility impairments.

The \$50k tree planting project approved at 2019 Town Meeting was put out to bid, but none of the nine entities that had expressed interest attended the briefing session or submitted bids even though the deadline for doing so was extended twice. The obstacle is that vendors are reluctant to guarantee a successful outcome for trees planted in the one place (Atlantic Street at CVS) deemed to meet all criteria.