

Marblehead Disabilities Commission
Meeting Minutes for September 13, 2018

Members Present: Laurie Blaisdell, Katie Farrell, Andrea Mountain, Cheryl LaLonde, Ed Lang, Caroline Curtis, Sue Harris

Guests Present: Jason Silva, Town Administrator; Nicholas Golden, representative from Lori Ehrlich's office; Chris Stevens, editor of the Marblehead Reporter

Laurie called the meeting to order at 4:25 p.m.

New Business:

Laurie introduced our guests and welcomed them to the meeting. She raised the following concerns with Silver and Golden, which were discussed by the group:

1. Complete Streets program - Laurie asked about next steps for the Complete Streets program and Commission members mentioned current issues such as tree roots in sidewalks, curb cuts, street and sidewalk maintenance not being done in a timely manner, etc. Silva explained that the Selectmen have adopted the Complete Streets Program. The goal of the Program is to make Marblehead as convenient and safe as possible for all modes of transportation for all groups. The next step is for the Selectmen to appoint a committee to create a prioritization plan for projects. The Town is hiring a consultant to facilitate this process. The Commission asked that a Commission member be invited to participate on this committee, and Silva agreed. Once the plan is complete, Marblehead will be able to apply for funding.
2. Accessibility for public land improvements that are privately funded – Laurie explained the Commission's concern that often volunteer groups making improvements to town owned spaces are not aware that they must comply with state and federal accessibility requirements. Silva agreed that any projects on town land must be compliant.
3. Grandfathering of Marblehead commercial buildings – existing buildings are often exempt from accessibility requirements if the cost of renovations is below a prescribed level. Laurie expressed the Commission's concern that this exemption has no time limit. Golden stated that legislation is introduced every year to address the issue, but so far has not advanced. He will keep the Commission informed about this issue.
4. New pedestrian crosswalks and lights – Laurie described a concern about new pedestrian crossing lights that are too far away from stoplights for drivers to easily see. Golden agreed to contact the DOT to determine requirements relating to new signals and report back to the Commission.

Silva and Golden then left the meeting and the Commission proceeded to discuss the following:

1. Discussion of variance request for 139 Pleasant Street. Renovations have been approved for this building, and the owner has requested an extension to 8/2023 to meet accessibility requirements for the first floor commercial establishment due to unexpected costs. The Commission voted (5 in favor, 1 opposed, and 1 abstained) to send a letter to the Building Inspector and Kyle Wylie opposing granting the variance.
2. Minutes from the July 12, 2018 meeting were reviewed and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

Next Meeting: Thursday, October 11, 2018 at 4:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Sue Harris, Member