

**Marblehead Disabilities Commission
Meeting Minutes of October 9, 2014**

Members Present: Laurie Blaisdell, Lloyd Caswell, Ron Grenier, Ed Lang, Katie Farrell, Andrea Mountain and Mark Horrigan.

Devereux Beach Playground Project Update: Chairperson Blaisdell reported that significant developments took place at the last meeting for which several members were not present. She said Chip Osborn enthusiastically supported the park's overhaul to include expanding accessibility to the board walk and playground components as suggested by the Commission. Osborn indicated major contributions were made from various sources including the Park and Rec Department to make this feasible. He told Blaisdell a financial contribution in the area of one thousand dollars would be welcomed to help defray the expense of additional mats. The Commission had previously discussed making such a donation when the project was presented to us at our August meeting. Work is expected to get underway this month Blaisdell said. Farrell reported that approximately \$2,100 should be available from handicap parking fines if the Commission chose to make a donation to the project. Members would also like Blaisdell to contact Frattie Welch to see if she could put a good word in the Reporter about this donation as a way of showing how the Commission works cooperatively with other town departments.

**Motion: By Caswell to make a donation of \$1,000 to playground project; seconded by Mountain.
Vote: Unanimous 7-0.**

Improvements to Town Sidewalks: Blaisdell began this discussion by providing background on this topic. She said that about a year or so ago the Commission had developed a list of about 125 sidewalk sites, mostly in the downtown areas, where access for the disabled is impeded. In developing this list the Commission prioritized sidewalk sites adjacent to public spaces where access for the disabled is a problem. This survey identified locations which fell mostly into two categories: (1) lack of a curb cut and/or (2) tree stump protrusion and interference with sidewalk access. To address the problem, Blaisdell said, the Commission established a goal of bringing to the Town's attention the need for at least 10 new curb cuts annually. This past year she reported the Town had completed 14 new curb cuts and the previous year 11 new cuts were installed. Everyone agreed we would like to continue this progress. Grenier agreed to contact the Tree and Highway Department to see what they could do to fund more sidewalk repairs for next year's town meeting consideration. Blaisdell said she would find the list so it could be updated to take into account those sites already fixed by the Town or as part of other completed construction projects.

Accessibility Projects in Town Master Plan: According to Blaisdell all cities and towns in the Commonwealth have an obligation, as part of their Master Plan, to specifically address how they intend to mitigate accessibility issues. She is uncertain about whether the Town's current master plan does so. The Commission agreed that she should look into this. She will first check in with the Town Engineer to see what information she may know about the master plan and whether or not accessibility issues are identified in the master plan.

Lang said he would like to see something done about providing better boat access from a public dock for the disabled. Blaisdell said there had been an attempt to do something at the Stramski dock in Salem Harbor but that for various reasons it did not work out. Blaisdell said she will contact the Harbormaster and the Harbors and Waters Commission to begin a conversation about this.

Future Goals for Disabilities Commission: In addition to the above goals related to sidewalk and water accessibility several members desire the Commission to work at improving the public's perception of the Commission itself. All agreed with this. Some of us think that our mission is misunderstood and under appreciated. The Commission has a local mandate but our compliance training and familiarity with state disability laws is also one we cannot discount in reviewing local projects. Other members believe that some businesses have the perception that their respective project costs will increase substantially or the schedule will be delayed if they seek the Commission's input as part of the project's initial design. But experience bears out that largely occurs when the Commission is either consulted after a project gets underway or overlooked. We want to avoid these scenarios and instead want to strategically improve our relationships with all project stakeholders, public and private such that we are consulted earlier and viewed as helpful, not detrimental to project's successful completion.

Next Meeting: Thursday, November 9th.

Respectfully Submitted
Ron Grenier, Member