

**Marblehead Disabilities Commission
Meeting Minutes of November 20, 2014**

Members Present: Laurie Blaisdell, Lloyd Caswell (by phone), Ron Grenier, Ed Lang, Katie Farrell, Andrea Mountain and Caroline Curtis.

Approve Minutes of October 9, 2014 Meeting: Mountain moved to approve minutes; motion seconded by Curtis. **VOTE: 6-0**

2013 Wish List/Curb Cut Report: Using his report as a point of reference Grenier briefed the Commission on what he learned. He reported that all the town officials he spoke with were very helpful and indicated a strong willingness to work with the Commission on a list of curb cut priorities. However, when asked, none of them had been informed of the Commission's 2013 priority list. Grenier explained how he was advised how the cost and construction of new curb cuts is funded. Town officials he spoke to are aware the state now requires that all Chapter 90 Aid distributed to cities and towns for road repair must also address the installation of ADA accessible curb cuts at the same time as repaving roads. It was pointed out to him that the Chapter 90 funds the state allocates to Marblehead for paving local roads will be necessarily offset by the cost of installing curb cuts. He was told a conservative estimate for an ADA curb cut is in the vicinity of \$5,000 - \$10,000, assuming there are no extenuating circumstances such as nearby infrastructure. The other way the Town absorbs the cost of new curb cuts is when those costs are identified as part of a larger facilities or infrastructure project i.e., the new Glover School or the recent street paving downtown as part of the Town's large sewer project. **Actions for the Commission:** (1) The Commission agreed, that solely with respect to curb cut installation, it should have input into Highway Department's annual Pavement Management Plan which is funded through Chapter 90 Aid. (2) The Commission agreed that it should further investigate the feasibility of having a separate town meeting warrant annually to fund ADA compliant curb cuts.

Strategies for Integrating Commission Into review of Town funded Projects: This part of the discussion focused on specific steps the Commission should look into to strengthen its role in advising and informing the Town on important accessibility issues. The items the Commission discussed as having merit in pursuing further are summarized as follows:

Town Should Have A Transition Plan That Identifies Barriers to Accessibility: Grenier reported that the Town does not have an official Transition Plan in accordance with ADA requirements. Under the American with Disabilities Act local governments are required to prepare such a plan for the purposes of identifying and ultimately removing structural barriers from local public facilities. While the Commission recognizes considerable progress has been made in recent years under various Town facility and some infrastructure projects all agreed that the absence of a plan as a guiding document precludes the Town from cost effective planning for advancing and prioritizing ADA facility compliance. This could leave the Town vulnerable to legal claims. Some communities have developed their "Transition Plans" by contracting with consultants which members recognized can be costly and the results might not adequately represent what is in the Town's best interests. We agreed a better approach for the Town would be to have the Commission take a lead role in developing a Transition Plan.

Proposed Infrastructure/Facilities Projects Funded by the Town Should Have the Commission's Input: Members of the Commission expressed concern over the degree to which infrastructure and facilities projects funded with taxpayers dollars do not involve the Commission's input at the earliest onset of a project's planning. Members spoke to past projects where the Commission either had to insert itself in

later stages when design modifications are costly to make or left out of the process entirely. Everyone felt the more appropriate time for the Commission to be consulted or brought in to the process is during the conceptual phase when the feasibility of a project is still under exploration. Blaisdell suggested a checklist where various town departments have to be called in for consultation might be such a mechanism. Everyone agreed that with the emergence of a new town manager the Commission should introduce itself to acquaint him with our advisory role. In addition, this would also be a good opportunity to engage him in a conversation about how the Commission can be routinely involved on taxpayer funded facility and infrastructure projects.

Action for the Commission: The Commission members agreed in January to approach the new town manager to solicit his understanding of our concerns . In addition, we want to seek his assistance in obtaining a charge from the Board of Selectmen that the Commission working in conjunction with appropriate town officials and departments lead the development of a Transition Plan for the Town of Marblehead. This plan would identify and prioritize structural and non-structural barrier removals and solutions with rough estimates of their cost and procedures for long-term implementation of the Plan.

Community Access Monitoring Seminar: Blaisdell mentioned some of the newest Commission members might find it instructive to attend training made available for community advocates. She and Farrell have found these to be very helpful.

Next Meeting: Thursday, December 11th.

Respectfully Submitted
Ron Grenier, Member