

Marblehead Disabilities Commission - Meeting Minutes – January 14, 2021

Members Present: Laurie Blaisdell, Andrea Mountain, Preston Ford, Katie Farrell, Amy Hirschkron, Sue Harris
Guests Present: Nancy Powell, Richard Remos

Laurie called the meeting to order at 4:20 p.m.

Minutes of the December 10, 2020 meeting were unanimously approved.

Upcoming Meeting Invitees. Laurie has reached out to Lori Ehrlich about attending the Commission's March meeting, but has not yet heard back. She will follow-up. The Commission discussed topics we would like her to discuss, including: (1) status of Accessible Massachusetts Act (H. 4425), proposed in the last MA legislative session; (2) sidewalk upgrade concerns; (3) accessibility requirements for new restaurants opening in existing restaurant spaces; (4) funds available for harbor accessibility. Commission members should contact Laurie with any other concerns that would like Lori Ehrlich to discuss. Laurie will also invite Jason Silva and Jeff Dugan to the meeting.

ADA Requirements for New Businesses in Existing Retail Spaces. Amy and Sue will research the accessibility regulations governing new businesses taking over existing retail spaces and report back to the Commission at our next meeting. The Commission discussed ideas for publicizing these requirements and possible financial incentives for businesses.

Other Town Disabilities Commission Websites. Andrea shared information she found on the websites of other towns' Disabilities Commissions, including a town form for issues with snow removal, emergency preparedness plans, forms to sign up for a Code Red program, and other links to helpful information. The Commission discussed adding some of these links to its website. The Commission also discussed ways to better get information out to the disabled and elderly communities about available resources. Laurie will contact the Council on Aging about working together to develop a contact list and ways to publicize important information, and the Commission agreed to further discuss at its next meeting.

Accessible Places in Marblehead. The Commission has previously developed a comprehensive list of businesses, parks, etc. that are accessible. Once pandemic-related travel restrictions are lifted, we agreed to explore ways of publicizing this information, including working with the Chamber of Commerce to add a designation to its annual Marblehead map.

Sidewalks. The Commission again discussed the possibility of proposing an Article for Town Meeting that would seek an override for funds for sidewalk renovation to make all Town sidewalks accessible. The Commission agreed that further research is needed before proposing such an article. Sue will contact Sustainable Marblehead about working with that organization on this issue.

Coordination with Other Town Boards/Commissions. The Commission discussed the need to work with other Town boards and commissions to insure that all are aware of ADA requirements when doing work on Town-owned land/facilities. Laurie will talk with Jason Silva about this issue and report back to the Commission at our next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:37 p.m.

Next Meeting: Thursday, February 18, 2021 at 4:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Sue Harris, Member