

Marblehead Disabilities Commission  
Meeting Minutes – April 8, 2021

Members Present: Laurie Blaisdell, Andrea Mountain, Preston Ford, Katie Farrell, Amy Hirschkron, Sue Harris  
Guests Present: State Representative Lori Ehrlich, Town Administrator Jason Silva, Massachusetts Office on Disability Representative Jeff Dougan, Preyel Patel (aide to Lori Ehrlich), Richard Ramos, Teri McDonough

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

1. Marblehead Sidewalks and Streets. Laurie asked about financial resources to help Marblehead repair and improve its streets and sidewalks and mentioned the need for Town boards and departments to work together to achieve this goal.
  - Lori Ehrlich described the following potential financial resources: (1) currently proposed MA transportation bills include funds for streets; (2) the Complete Streets program's funding to communities may include funding for sidewalks.
  - Jeff Dougan described the MOD Municipal ADA Grant Program as a possible source of funds. This is a highly competitive program that provides up to \$250,000. Applications are due in late July/early August each year.
  - Jason Silva stated that (1) Marblehead's annual paving program is funded by c.90 funds from the state (about \$400,000 annually); (2) all repaving projects require ADA compliant curb cuts; (3) the Complete Streets Program just awarded Marblehead \$400,000 to improve rail trail crossings at Mohawk & Pleasant Streets, Tower School, and Smith Streets; (3) Marblehead has applied to the MOD for funding to update its ADA Transition Plan without success, but will apply again for the next funding round.
  
1. Harbor Access. Laurie described harbor accessibility issues as being able to get to the water and dock and launch sites and the lack of accessible boat ramps. Jeff Dougan said that the State building code and the 2010 ADA Design Standards interact and sometimes conflict. There are proposed regulations to update the Architectural Access Board (AAB) requirements to conform to the ADA Design Standards for water access (which would require the town to look at all water access locations). Jason Silva stated that there currently is a harbor update plan underway funded by the Seaport & Economic Council. This project is currently out to bid for the second time. The Board of Selectmen will set up a steering committee once the plan is underway, and Jason will solicit input from the Disabilities Commission.
  
2. Legislative Update. Lori described three proposals currently being considered by the state legislature. H. 4425 from the last session is now split into two dockets:
  - (1) House Docket 2107 removes barriers to work that discriminate against those with disabilities, requires that the AAB include at least one member of the disability community, extends the AAB's authority to include public spaces around buildings, and changes the definition of "public building" to align with the ADA.
  - (2) House Docket 2116 expands the availability of adaptable housing to those with disabilities by requiring that 5% of units in residential facilities be accessible.
  - (3) House Docket 2111 would provide a tax credit of \$5,000 for the first year and \$2500 for each of the next five years for small business employers who hire individuals with disabilities. Lori is a co-sponsor of this proposed bill.
  
3. Public Bathrooms. Jason said that updates to the Devereux Beach bathrooms not in the capital budget for 2021.
  
4. Business Accessibility. Laurie B. raised the issue of business/restaurant accessibility requirements, which now are only triggered if the cost of renovation is 30% or more than the building's assessed value. Rep.

Ehrlich said she is not aware of any proposed bills that would change this requirement. Jeff Dougan mentioned federal tax breaks for small businesses doing renovations that trigger the accessibility requirements that have been in place since 1996.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:24 p.m.

Next Meeting: Thursday, May 13 at 4:15 p.m.