

Commission on Disabilities  
Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes  
April 7, 2021  
**Annual Meeting**

This Commission on Disabilities meeting was held by electronic means due to the COVID-19 Emergency.

**Commissioners:**

Laurie Berner - P  
Ashlie Castaldo - P  
Roberta Cich - P  
Amanda Crosby - P  
Tom Furman - P  
Heath Maki - P  
Dianne Naus - P  
Samantha Smingler - P

**Also present:** Carl Crawford, Mark Bauer, Laura Laaksonen

**Approval of current agenda:** MS/C – (Maki/Crosby)

**Approval of April minutes:** MS/C - (Maki/Naus)

**Public Comment/Information:** None

**Accessible Parking update:**

- Mr. Bauer reported that 3 requests for ADA parking spots were approved at the March Parking Commission meeting and 3 additional spots were approved at the April meeting for a total of 6.
- The Essentia parking ramp design process is nearly complete. There are a significant number of accessible parking spots included in the design.
  - o Commissioner Smingler asked about new bus stops location and accessibility. The Commission will ask if someone from DTA can attend the next meeting to answer these questions.

**Parks and Rec report:**

- Commissioner Crosby reported she has been working with Parks and Rec to find a good outdoor location for the Mayor's welcome address to this summer's ADA celebration.

- Commissioner Crosby discussed News Tribune article highlighting improvements made to the Lakewalk. The Lakewalk construction should be complete by Grandma's Marathon.
- There will be a Hawk Ridge accessibility focus group that will be looking at improvements and accessibility of the trail loop.
  - o Commissioner Castaldo asked if there were volunteer opportunities. Commissioner Crosby will provide volunteer information.
  - o Commissioner Smingler asked about funding. Commissioner reported there is separate funding with City input.

**Elections:** The following slate of Officers was elected. MS/C (Furman/Maki)  
 Chair – Roberta Cich  
 Vice-Chair – Laurie Berner  
 Secretary – Amanda Crosby

**Old Business:**

- The Snow Removal Task Force is looking forward to a wrap up meeting.

**New Business:**

- The City is seeking input regarding barriers to accessing/utilizing City services.
  - o There was conversation about the need for ASL (American Sign Language) interpreters – especially at press conferences and during emergencies
  - o DHHS (the State Department of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services) was identified as a resource to getting a good understanding of the needs.
  - o Commissioner Smingler brought up the importance of print materials being accessible (font size/contrast/alternatives/etc.).

**Current Disability Issues:**

- Mr. Crawford has received concerns in a couple of areas as a result of the COVID pandemic.
  - o Concern has been raised about people (though well meaning) not respecting the personal space of people who use wheelchairs. Individuals are offering unrequested assistance like pushing or touching people's wheelchairs and also not respecting social distancing. The Commission feels education and awareness would be helpful.

- There have also been concerns raised around masks. Individuals report not feeling safe when there are those who refuse to wear masks in stores. The Commission again talked about education for retail workers about alternatives that can be offered to shoppers who can't or won't wear a mask. Examples are curbside pickup, ordering online or alternate shopping hours.
- Commissioner Maki brought up concerns around the Skywalk doors. Mr. Crawford will connect the City staff to see when this has been looked at and what can be done.

**Other Business**

- ADA Anniversary Celebration will be held on July 26<sup>th</sup>. Mayor Larson will do the welcome. Other participants include: Meredith Kujala (Arc Northland) – MC, Sue Abderholden – NAMI, Todd Gurgel – MNDOT, Peter berg – Great Lakes ADA, Bold Choice Theatre and a panel focusing on resilience.

**Announcements:** None

**Adjourn:** 4:00 MS/C (Furman/Maki)