



Commission on Disabilities
Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes
May 5, 2021

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

Vice Chair, Commissioner Berner, called the meeting to order and started with roll call. We do have a quorum.

Commissioners:

Roberta Cich - A

Laurie Berner - P

Amanda Crosby - P

Ashlie Castaldo - 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/Castaldo)

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

Public Comment/Information:

Deputy Chief Marquardt joined our meeting this afternoon and is seeking a member of the Commission to join the Duluth Racial Bias Audit project committee. The committee will work towards an audit that will develop into an RFP. The committee will also review RFP proposals and select the business/company to conduct the audit for the Duluth Police Department. Meetings will begin as soon as next month.

Commissioner Berner asked how many individuals would be involved. Marquardt responded that she would like to have a member from every commission but not over 10 individuals. Commissioner Maki questioned the time commitment.

Commissioner Costaldo noted it is important to look at different racial demographics as different cultures have different views on disability. Costaldo inquired what is the groups plan to tackle this. Deputy Chief Marquardt's hope is all individuals in our community to be represented as well as we can. Commissioner Costaldo is interested in being a part of this project and joining this committee.

Any further questions you can contact Deputy Chief Marquardt directly. The commission will plan to discuss participation at our June meeting.

Imarquardt@duluthmn.gov,

Phone: (218) 730-5501

Accessible Parking Update:

Officer Mark Bauer Accessible Parking updates include 3 approvals since the March meeting.

12 E 6th Street – presented and approved

614 E 8th Street presented and approved

5706 Tioga street- approved at April meeting

The Parking Commission has 2 additional accessible requests for upcoming meeting. Both recommended for approval. The Parking Commission will be meeting Friday 5/7.

Update on the new parking ramp in the medical district; nothing new, when further a long do intend to ask approval of accessible parking lay out.

They are in the process of fixing accessible parking at the existing facility on 3rd and 4th Officer Bauer existing parking updating the auto door openers to increase accessibility.

Parks and Rec Report:

Commissioner Crosby invited the commission to participate in the upcoming public comment/planning meetings for Enger Golf Course.

The public is invited to virtual public meetings on Tuesday, May 18 at 5:00 p.m. and again on Tuesday, June 1 at 12 p.m. (noon) to provide input for the proposed Enger Golf Course renovations.

Enger Golf Course renovation items include a new irrigation system, new clubhouse, improvements to fairways, and bunker renovations. This work is planned for 2023 while the course is closed to golf play and Lester Park Golf Course reopens for one final season of golf.

To join the meeting, please visit <https://duluthmn.gov/live-meeting/> then select “Parks & Recreation Public Meetings”. The link to this meeting will then appear. Commissioner Crosby will send this information to commissioners via email.

Old Business:

In our April Meeting Commissioner Maki brought up concerns related to the doorways in the Skywalk not all having push buttons. Officer Bauer and Mr. Crawford noted that not all doors need to have push buttons in some cases but are following up on this concern. Looking at options in the Skywalk has a lot of factors to consider. One of these factors includes “grandparenting” in prior to the passing of the ADA, which the commission questioned. Also, there is ambiguity around who owns (is responsible for) each door. There are some businesses claiming undue hardship. Commissioner Smigler and Commissioner Berner offered to start a Skywalk Task force committee with Mr. Crawford.

Officer Bauer did note (regarding new parking in the medical district) that when it comes to parking ramps across the city there will be no “grandparenting”. He expects all public city parking be accessible.

Commissioner Smigler questioned if there was any follow up from the DTA on accessibility and the accessibility of services offered by the City of Duluth. Mr. Crawford noted, yes there was follow up. Rod Fournier was scheduled to join the commission meeting today but was unable to attend. Mr. Crawford will be rescheduling with the DTA. Mr. Crawford is still in discussions on the barriers to access city services.

New Business:

Officer Bauer announced they are planning to open up the Farmer's Market outside of Duluth's civic center located on Priley Drive later in the season. The Farmer's Market did not happen in 2020 due to COVID-19. Officer Bauer will be bringing plans to the commission for ADA considerations and will keep us updated as planning moves forward. The commissioners noted we can utilize our checklist for special events. Officer Bauer asked for us to forward to him, which Mr. Crawford will do. Commissioner Smigler will also be sharing the MN Access Alliance checklist for outdoor festivals developed by the MN State Arts Board.

Current Disability Issues:

It was brought up to Mr. Crawford that when it comes to vacation rentals, such as Air B&B and VRBO there is a lack of accessible options. A family reached out to Mr. Crawford stating they wanted to come to this area with their family but were unable to find an accessible rental unit for someone who uses a wheelchair. Mr. Crawford noted that this is something the commission might be able to bring awareness to. Commissioner Castaldo spoke a little on some legislation around Air B&B at the state level. Commissioner Castaldo noted it might be more effective if we started working with our local Bed and Breakfasts first to bring awareness to the accessibility concerns and make changes at a local level. Air B&B is a large organization that is difficult to work with.

Commissioner Maki noted a physical barrier (large hump) outside of the Duluth Depot that is causing mobility concerns for individuals.

Commissioner Smigler questioned if the commission could offer accessibility walk throughs for businesses in Duluth suggesting that the commission open it up to businesses. The idea would be business would sign up and we, as a commission, would conduct so many audits throughout the year. Commissioner Berner suggested that we look at the Commission Goals to see if they can be adjusted or updated to add this option for the community.

Other Business: Mr. Crawford announced that Andrea Crouse, Community Development Manager at Zeitgeist, is looking for a commission's interest in assisting with 2021's Walk Bike Bus event. Deadline for participation is needed by 5/7, which is short notice. Carl will follow up and send information to the commission. Bus Bike Walk month is a series of community events that celebrate, educate and empower accessible transportation in our community.

Announcements:

Commissioner Smigler is now working at the Duluth Play House. The goal is to develop an accessibility position. Commissioner Smigler sees a disconnect between the disability theater community all over MN and is hoping to create awareness and change in that area.

Commissioner Castaldo announced she will be running for one of the two At Large City Council Positions.

Adjourn: MS/C (Smigler/Furhman)