



Commission on Disabilities
Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes
March 2, 2022

This Commission on Disabilities meeting was held electronically via WebEx due to the COVID-19 Emergency.

Commissioners:

Laurie Berner - P
Ashlie Castaldo - P
Roberta Cich – P
Amanda Crosby - P
Allison Fochs - P
Tom Furman - P
Dianne Naus - P
Samantha Smingler – A

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

Chair Berner called the March, 2022 Commission on Disabilities meeting to order, there was a quorum.

Approval of current agenda: MS/C – (Fochs, Castaldo)

Approval of February minutes: MS/C – (Furman, Naus)

Public Comment/Information: No public comment.

Accessible Parking Update:

Officer Mark Bauer provided an update for the Commission. There were 5 new ADA parking spots proposed and approved at the February Parking Commission meeting. There are no new requests at this time.

- Commissioner Furman asked about the process for removing signs no longer needed. Officer Bauer reported that ADA signs are removed quite often, usually a result of community members reporting that they are no longer needed. The City will also periodically review ADA sites.
- Commissioner Fochs asked about the process for requesting a new ADA spot if a person moves. Officer Bauer reviewed the process. The individual should ask for the removal of the current sign. Then reapply with the City for a new ADA parking spot in the new location. Officer Bauer will do a site visit and connect with others within the City if necessary. The request then goes on the Parking Commission Agenda.

Parks and Rec Report: No report this meeting.

- Mr. Crawford congratulated Chester Bowl for receiving a grant/award for the good work they do.. Commissioners agreed that Chester Bowl has done a great job for many years.

Old Business:

Snow Removal Task Force-

- Mr. Crawford reported that the Snow Removal Assistance Program is going well. Volunteers are doing a good job.
- Commissioner Berner shared a frustration experienced by a coworker involving trying to remove snow the plow had deposited their sidewalk. Commissioners agreed that it is sometimes physically impossible to remove the snow the plow has put on sidewalks and driveways.
- Commissioner Cich talked about sidewalk snow removal and bus stop snow removal being connected but separate conversations. Sidewalks are the responsibility of the property owner (business/residential/City). There is a lot of confusion still over who is responsible for bus stops.
 - o Mr. Crawford has been working with the City to locate any historical information or documentation related to the bus stops. He has also connected with the City's legal team.
 - o Commissioner Fochs shared her frustration with snow and ice at her bus stop. She has safety concerns.
 - o Commissioners reported waiting at a corner or some nearby accessible area close to a bus stop and hoping the bus will stop for them.
- Commissioner Naus said that examples of the barriers are important. There is some Case Law around this topic that Attorneys at MN Disability Law have shared. Commissioner Nause is going to see if there are Attorneys who will do some more research on this topic.
- Commissioner Cich reported on conversations around snow removal at the DTA Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting. The issues and challenges are the same. Many people are frustrated with snow and ice at bus stops and sidewalks leading to bus stops. Commissioner Cich reported that DTA Officials would welcome a meeting with the Commission Task Force and City Officials.
 - o Mr. Crawford will set up a meeting. He thinks the timeline will be 6 to 10 days. That will give everyone time to prepare.

New Business: None

Current Disability Issues:

Priority Areas for this year: Commissioners brought up many issues for the Commission to be working on. The following will be priorities:

- Employment
 - o Commissioner Berner shared the serious issues caused by a lack of Direct Support Professionals. This is related to Housing as well because some group homes have had to close.
 - o There was also discussion about living wages and employment opportunities for people with disabilities.
 - o It was suggested to look at DEED (Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development) to find statistics about employment of people with disabilities.
 - o VRS (Vocational Rehabilitation Services) would be a good speaker for a future Commission meeting.

- Housing
 - o Commissioner Furman talked about the lack of services, supports and resources needed to help people be successful in housing
 - o Housing vacancy rate in Duluth and Two Harbors is 1% making it extremely difficult to find affordable housing.
 - o Commissioners agreed that there is so much involved with Housing that it can be difficult for the Commission to prioritize areas of focus.
 - o Commissioner Berner will ask the Arc Housing Team to come to the April Commission meeting to talk about their program and share barriers people face.
 - o Commissioner Castaldo also suggested bringing in someone from the Homeless Outreach Program.
- Community Accessibility
 - o Community access is always a primary concern for the Commission. This includes sidewalks, snow removal and issues that come up throughout the year.

The Commission favors bringing in people (as guest speakers) to educate the Commission and to help narrow the focus. Work groups can then be set up to help move these issues forward.

Correspondence/Public Comment: None.

Other Business/Announcements:

Commissioner Cich reported that the DTA Accessibility Advisory Committee met in February. They are now fully staffed for both STRIDE Drivers and Fixed Route drivers. There was also the discussion on snow removal (referenced above).

Adjourn: 4:20 pm

Next meeting is Wednesday April 6th, 2022 3:00 PM
Location to be determined.