

Northampton Disability Commission
Gene Page, Chair
City Councilor Marianne LaBarge, Vice-Chair
Northampton Senior Center, 67 Conz Street, Northampton, MA 01060

Minutes of the June 18, 2019 Disability Commission Meeting

Members Present: Letisha Ward, Marianne LaBarge, Gene Page, Linda Kakos, Emma Cornwell, Jim Winston, Jeremy Macomber-Dabs , Judy Kimberly, Chris Palames

Members Absent: Hannah Coyle

ADA Coordinator Present: Marie Westburg

Guests present: Robert Weir and Michael C. Morton

Recorder: Douglas Renick

Public Comment:

Robert Weir of Woods Road, Florence. He has had issues with snow removal in the past. I am a disabled person to most people. I live beside a state protected wetland and have 89 yds of sidewalk to shovel. The person assigned to shovel can't do it. No one wants to do it because of liability issues. He is caught between a rock and a hard place. City ordinance says if you are in a wheel chair and a property owner you can be fined for not removing snow. Regulations do not spell out what "disability" means. I had a seizure shoveling snow. I was hurt in other ways shoveling snow, as was my wife. I was given a list of people who can shovel snow. Frequently it's a company and they don't do one property. I hired a teenager, but he was not totally reliable. Marianne LaBarge had helped Robert with a list of people who could remove snow. That list has dwindled to almost zero. City needs to think about how the ordinance is written. The elderly are not exempt from the regulations to clear the sidewalk. Who should move the snow? Phil Sullivan maybe could help. Northampton Neighbors may help, but there are liability issues. I can't be the only person with this issue. He was assured he was not. Someone from the city suggested that Rob move, if he can't take care of his property. City needs regulations that cover all people.

Michael Morton: "I'd like to rejoin the Commission. It is nice to be here." Michael was welcomed.

Welcome and Introductions: A name circle was completed for everyone present.

Approval of the May 21, 2019 minutes:

Two corrections were approved:

Correction 1. The grant of \$250K from the Massachusetts Office of Disability was for improvements to the Saccessibility of the pedestrian environment around City Hall and the municipal annex. The motion to make this correction was approved.

Correction 2. Renewal of Commission membership applications when completed are sent to the Mayor's Office not to the City Council. The motion to make this correction was approved.

Commission Membership Renewals: People who have put in their applications have to be interviewed by City Services. People will be contacted for the interview if their application has been approved. Is there a list of the terms of current members? It's on the website. We also need to check with individual members of the Commission.

ADA Transition Plan revisions, plan for public forums: The Plan is posted on the website. The press release went out. The first of three forums is on June 24, 7:00-8:15, at the Senior Center in great room. Need to publicize. Northampton Neighbors will be notified. It will be in the Gazette. Monty Belmonte (Jeremy will talk to him.) After the first forum we will have people to be interviewed. Senior Center network will be notified. Speak to people you know. Marie shared flyers that people took to give to people they know. Other forums will include the deaf community, a forum at a school in the Fall, in the summer city departments. We can take the time needed on public comment and discussion. The aim is to move forward towards a position for the ADA Coordinator. Marianne LaBarge: we are on the second reading of the budget. It will be hard to get a crowd at a school during the summer. Let's see who comes on Monday. How do we know if the process is moving forward on the ADA position? The Mayor knows that the creation of the ADA Coordinator position is key to moving the Plan forward. Motion: The ADA Coordinator will talk to the Mayor's office and report back to the Commission regarding progress on the creation of an ADA Coordinator position, which is not attached to another job. Motion made, seconded and approved.

New Business: The film *Fight for Disability Rights* is being licensed through the Department of Education and it will be made available to teachers. How shall we speak to the schools about this? Speak to someone in charge of curriculum, not the Superintendent, and set up a meeting. A sub-committee of the Commission might be useful here. A motion was made that the chair appoint a sub-committee to meet with administrators of the School Department to move toward adding the *Fight for Disability Rights* to the curriculum. The motion was approved. The process of licensure eliminates the cost of film to the schools. Licensure has happened and now the Education Department is looking for a secure downloading mechanism. The Northampton City Information Technology department can help in the downloading.

Adjournment: Motion by Chris Palames and seconded by Jeremy Macomber-Dabs Unanimously approved.