

Northampton Disability Commission
210 Main Street, Northampton 01060
Planning & Sustainability, 2nd Floor City Hall
Tuesday January 28, 2020

Gene Page, Chair
 Marianne LaBarge, Vice Chair
 Emma Cornwell, member
 Jeremy Macomber-Dubs, member
 Linda Kakos, member
 Marilyn Clare, member
 Rodney Kunath, member
 Michael Morton, member

Staff: Wayne Feiden
Scribe: Douglas Renick
Interpreter: Clare Triano

Introductions of all present.

Public Comments: None

Approval of November 19, 2019 minutes:

Marianne LaBarge moved approval. Gene Page seconded the motion. Motion unanimously approved.

Update on Disabilities Commission staffing:

The Disability Commission was moved to Planning & Sustainability from the Northampton Senior Center. A new Community Development Planner/ADA Coordinator will be hired soon. The Director of Planning & Sustainability will staff the Commission during the transition plan. Michael Morton offered to take pictures to support the ADA transition plan and grants, if needed, to help provide support. Planning & Sustainability has already partnered with the Disabilities Commission, on the structural ADA assessment, addressing physical barriers to accessibility, and obtaining grants to support the work. Commission members asked who is in charge of ADA requirements in the schools? Feiden explained that the city is trying to build consensus to improve issues and working with David Pomerantz, Director of Central Services, has responsibility for improvements to all city buildings, including the schools.

Election Chair and Vice-Chair:

George Page served as chair for this meeting. The committee elected new officers, to go in effect at the next meeting.

Nominations for Chair: Jeremy Macomber-Dubs was nominated by Emma Cornwell. With no other nominations Emma Cornwell moved the election of Jeremy as Chair. Michael Morton seconded the motion. Roll call vote for Jeremy: unanimous approval as Chair.

Nominations for Vice-Chair: Emma Cornwell was nominated by Marianne LaBarge and seconded by Gene Page. With no other nominations, there was a roll call vote which was unanimous for Emma as Vice-Chair.

Review of 2019 changes to implement Disabilities Commission recommendations:

1. Electric wheelchair/mobility device charger installed at City Hall.
2. Accessible water fountain installed at Pulaski Park.

3. Wheelchair ramps included as part of all DPW street repaving projects.
4. \$130,000 of Community Development Block Grant funding obtained for additional wheelchair ramps at streets that are not being repaved, as requested. 2019 work included the design for 17 ramps, including approximately nine on shared use paths. Only ramps, not sidewalks, are eligible under federal rules in this funding category.
5. A commitment of Safe Routes to School funding for Bridge Street School that will include, probably in 2021, curb cut and sidewalk improvements on Parsons and Hawley Street to make them accessible.

Review of 2020 changes to implement Disabilities Commission recommendations:

1. The CDBG curb cut ramps (designed in 2019, above) will be installed.
2. Future Safe Routes to School upgrade at Bridge Street School (funded in 2019, above) will be designed, for 2021 construction, at Parsons Street and Hawley Street.
3. Main Street will be redesigned over the next six years (\$14 million), including address all ADA considerations, wheelchair ramps, sidewalk side slopes, tactile warnings, shortening pedestrian crossing distances, and generally making it safer. The Disabilities Commission will be used as a sounding board. Ideas raised by the committee at this first discussion: a Hawk pushbutton actuated pedestrian signal, slowing down traffic generally, more electric wheelchair chargers, focus on the dangerous crosswalk in front of city hall.
4. Damon Road reconstruction with pedestrian and accessibility accommodations is beginning, at Exit 19 in 2020 and the rest of Damon Road going into 2021.
5. North King Street/Hatfield Road reconstruction will include pedestrian and accessibility improvements, including sidewalks, ramps, crosswalks, and a roundabout. Part of the conversation was about ensuring that new sidewalks remain free of snow.
6. King Street (from North Street to the bike path crossing) will include new sidewalks and accessibility improvement and goes to bid in 2020, with construction extending to 2021.
7. North Street/Edwards Square/MassCentral Rail Trail accessible access to the bike path just received a grant and will go to bid and construction in 2020.
8. An easement for new access to the Ryan Road School is planned for 2020, but accessibility improvements have not yet been funded.

Proposed upgrade: sound amplification system to ADA-compliant Assisted Listening System.

The City Council has an Assisted Listening System, but it only works if public access TV is there. We need to explore having it on for all meetings. The City Hall Hearing Room has no system. The Disability Commission began the conversation about funding this system from the handicap parking revolving fund, since the system would be portable and would also work for all Disabilities Commission meeting (estimated \$1,400 to \$2,000) and make the Hearing Room fully compliant. Feiden will get prices and bring to the next Commission meeting for consideration. Parts of the existing system, including the speaker, are not useful for an assisted listening system. Marianne LaBarge made the motion to give those parts to the schools or other city needs. Marilyn Clare seconded the motion. Unanimously approved.

Department of Health ADA strategic planning grant:

Planning & Sustainability obtained a \$5,000 grant to help do strategic planning for planning for people with disabilities to improve health outcomes and support Planning's consideration of how to support ADA Coordinator duties. Feiden asked for Commission ideas for how to spend these planning funds to finish draft ADA transition plan and identify priorities. Commission members identified improvements to getting snow off sidewalks and curb ramps as one of their top priorities, which could be aided by using the planning funds to identify priorities for snow removal, create a volunteer program of citizens to monitor snow removal and report to the police when snow is not being removed within 24 hours. Police will do enforcement, but not monitoring.

ADA Transition Plan update and adoption

Planning & Sustainability is working with a tax-abatement work-of volunteer to edit the Transition Plan and add the CDBG Section 504 elements, as whatever comes out of the Massachusetts Department of Health grant (above). Once this is done, the plan will come back to the Commission for action.

2020 meeting schedule: generally monthly, second Tuesday, 4:00-5:30.

Next meeting: Feb. 11, 2020

Adjournment at 5:20 PM: Marianne LaBarge moved to adjourn. Jeremy seconded the motion. Motion unanimously approved.