

Planning & Sustainability • City of Northampton

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Disability Commission Minutes Tuesday February 9, 2021 4:00 PM

Zoom Meeting

Members

Jeremy Macomber-Dubs, Chair <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Marianne LaBarge <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Keith Benoit, Staff <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Emma Cornwell, Vice Chair <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Gene Page <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Doug Renick, Scribe <input type="checkbox"/>
Linda Kakos <input type="checkbox"/>	Clare Marilyn <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Kathy Murri <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Rodney Kunath <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Michael Morton <input type="checkbox"/>	

1. Introduction and public comments. No public comments at this time.
Councilor Karen Foster said that she wanted to listen in on the discussion on the Plastic Reduction Ordinance.
2. The Disability Commission open the conversation floor with Donna LaScalia, Director, Department of Public Works. Donna LaScalia introduced herself and gave an update on snow removal operations for the City. The City has 150 miles of roads in the City and 85 miles of sidewalk. Different responsibility for each of the portion of sidewalk, within 24 hours of snow. DPW clears snow on 7 miles of sidewalk in front of the City. They also clear snow under railroad bridges, on bridges, and in pocket parks. They start in Leeds and end in Hockanum Road. They have one machine to clear all of the sidewalk, which for one person takes six hours and costs the City \$150,000 plus the maintenance. If it breaks in a storm, the City will have downtime. If there is a heavy storm, then that route must be done twice. The person starts overnight or at 3 am to ensure schools. There is also a crew of hand shoveling that must take place such as Pulaski Park, Academy of Music, and around City Hall. Then all the sidewalk must be treated with salt which is an additional expense and time. For a snowstorm like today, they have 65 people on the road plowing, plus the one person on the machine.
3. Jeremy Dubs asked about the wheelchair curb cuts, is that something the DPW focuses on? It is for the parts of the City that they clear, but it may be Parking Services or Central Services. Jeremy Dubs also asked about empty storefronts, who can clear them? Donna LaScalia said that it is the property owner's job, not necessarily the business. The City does have a mechanism to



cite business owners to compel them to shovel. Councilor Marianne LaBarge asked if the sidewalk going up to Florence Heights is owned by the City and is that on the City route to plow. Donna LaScalia said it was owned by the City and she would get back to ensure that it was on the route. Emma Cornwell asked is there is a better way to get sidewalks to be cleared. Donna LaScalia said that the DPW does a lot with the funding and resources available to the DPW. There may be other resources available and the ordinances is written to put the burden on the property owner. If it takes 6 hours to plow 7 miles, then it extrapolating out, we would need a lot more resources. Marianne LaBarge asked if there was any more grants or funding available to buy the machinery. Donna LaScalia said that the ongoing additional responsibility would be an expense, despite getting a grant. The work hours required can be hampered by sickness or illnesses, especially during the COVID era. Marianne LaBarge asked if there was a way to get more people to shovel snow by contracting out the snow shoveling.

4. The Commission approved unanimously with a roll call vote upon motion by Marianne LaBarge and second by Jeremy Dubs the minutes from January 12, 2021.
5. Updates: Keith Benoit gave updates on receiving grant funding for MOD to install assisted listening devices at the City Hall Haring Room, Council Chambers, and the Senior Center great room. The City is reviewing the quotes from the vendors now. The City is also moving forward with the plastic reduction ordinance, with some of the recommendations from the Disability Commission.
6. Disability Commission discussed the Accessible Parking language. Karen Foster asked the Disability Commission for their opinion on the language that should be used, given that ADA uses “accessible parking” and “disabled” for people rather than “handicap”. Emma Cornwell agrees. Kathy Murri agrees that accessible parking is a better language choice. Emma Cornwell asked if that they need a formal letter from the Disability Commission. Marianne LaBarge suggested that the commission send a formal letter for the language. Karen Foster gave an update on the accessible icon that shows movement and independence – what the questions are for switching over the stickers across the City. She proposed a subgroup meet before the next meeting and give her the edits in writing.
7. Next meeting: The Commission decided to meet on Tuesday, March 9, 2021 at 4:00 PM.
8. Adjourn at 5:26 PM unanimously upon motion by Emma Cornwell and second by Rodney Kunath.