

**Marblehead Disabilities Commission
Meeting Minutes of January 15, 2015**

Members Present: Laurie Blaisdell, Ron Grenier, Andrea Mountain, Caroline Curtis, Katie Farrell and Lloyd Caswell (via phone.)

Approve Minutes of December 11, 2014 Meeting: Mountain moved to approve minutes; motion seconded by Curtis. Caswell could not vote at this time. **VOTE: 5-0**

Curb Cut Article for 2015 Town Meeting: Previously the Commission discussed the possibility of presenting an article which would specifically address the construction of ADA curb cuts in places deemed a priority. Grenier reported that recently he was advised that the new Highway chief (Art Graves) had requested the town engineer look into advertising for a separate contract for curb cut installations since the Aggregate contract for road repair did not. This was viewed as a positive development which would enable the town to satisfy a Chapter 90 requirement that roads repaired with these funds also had to address curb cuts at the same time. Blaisdell referenced a news release that Chapter 90 aid to cities and towns was going to be released and that Marblehead would receive in 2015 a considerable increase in such funds. Instead of submitting an article to address curb cuts the Commission favored presenting a list of curb cut priorities for 2015 to the Highway Department. This was something the former town administrator, Jeff Chelgren, had encouraged the Commission to do in 2014. This was done via an e-mail but apparently it had not been shared with the appropriate town officials. Notwithstanding that glitch the Commission believes that is still a good approach to follow for 2015. **Next Step: Grenier will take the lead in providing Arthur Graves with the 2015 priority list. The Commission will also follow up with the new town administrator about this item when he attends our February 15th meeting.**

ADA Transition Plan/Accessibility Survey: Grenier reported he had received a copy of an ADA Transition Plan from Kyle Wiley, the town's ADA Coordinator. Previously Grenier had been told the Town did not have such a plan. Grenier said he reviewed the transition plan. He passed a copy of the plan around while sharing his observations with the Commission. First he pointed out that a substantial number of items contained in the plan which was dated back to 1997, had been addressed as part of new building construction and renovation undertaken by the town since. Notable among these projects were construction of the high school, Glover School and the Community Center as well as major work completed at Abbott Hall and the Old Town House.

Grenier also pointed out that the plan outlines a grievance procedure with a specific timeline protocol. The Commission agreed that such an important policy should be posted on our web page. A vote was subsequently taken to that effect. **Motion by Grenier to post town ADA grievance procedure on the Commission's web page; motion seconded by Curtis. Vote 5-0 in favor. Caswell could not vote. Next Step: Mountain who maintains the web page agreed to do this by our next meeting.**

Everyone agreed that the ADA transition plan should be updated to take into account the town's progress in addressing previously identified accessibility issues. However, as we previously agreed we would still need to proceed with conducting an accessibility survey to identify any remaining barriers to accessibility as our top priority. This way the Transition Plan can be made current while planning for the future. Grenier shared a draft of the survey he prepared with members and explained how and why the focus of the survey is on access. All agreed we should seek the support of the town administrator and the help of department heads in conducting this survey.

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Next Step: This too we plan to take up as another topic to discuss with the new town administrator at our February meeting.

Facebook Presence: Blaisdell shared with the Commission an e-mail she had received from Mary Levine, the Commission's previous chairperson. In it Levine suggested that the Commission seriously consider having a presence on Facebook as a way of further increasing our ability to communicate and share information in real time about points of interest or concern with respect to accessibility. One of our goals in 2015 is to be more visible to the community at large which everyone agreed Facebook could be helpful in doing. A vote was taken after discussing how we would go about making this operational and establishing who would have the responsibility of maintaining and monitoring its proper use. **Grenier motioned for the Disabilities Commission to have a presence on Facebook; seconded by Curtis. VOTE 5-0 Caswell did not vote. Next Step: Curtis would take the lead in establishing a Facebook account for the Commission by our next meeting.**

ABLE Act Passage: The acronym ABLE stands for Achieving A Better Life Experience. Blaisdell and Mountain shared with the Commission a news release that this federal law was recently passed by Congress and signed by the President. Under its provisions persons with a disability determined eligible will be able to receive a certain type of tax break. Specifically, persons with disabilities could open special accounts where they could save up to \$100,000 without risk of jeopardizing other benefits they receive. Its implementation, however, will be up to the individual states. We agreed that it is important to let our state house legislators (Erlich/McGee) know the Commission would support a Massachusetts implementation of the ABLE Act. Farrell agreed to call their offices accordingly.

New State Law (s.1985): At our last meeting Blaisdell reported that Lloyd Caswell a long time resident and disabled member of the Commission moved into an assisted living facility in Peabody. This raised questions about the status of his membership on the Commission, as well as his attendance at future meetings. Blaisdell informed the Commission about her discussions with various officials with respect to s.1985. Blaisdell advised that Governor Patrick signed this legislation near the end of his administration. Under s.1985 persons with a disability are authorized to participate and vote in meetings of public entities such as our Disabilities Commission via telephone. However, she said, this legislation would not take effect for another 90 days. In addition, Blaisdell was told by the Town Clerk that because Caswell was appointed instead of elected to the Commission he would not have to resign because his main domicile is now in Peabody. Caswell was so advised and as a result did not vote on any of our motions. Everyone agreed we look forward to his full participation in the near future.

Next Meeting: Thursday, February 15th.

Respectfully Submitted
Ron Grenier