



Commission on Disabilities  
Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes  
**Wednesday, March 6 2024**  
**City Hall Room 430**

**Commissioners:** *indicate present (P) or absent (A)*

Laurie Berner - P  
Ashlie Castaldo, Chair - A  
Amanda Crosby - P  
Allison Fochs - P  
Christina Johnson, Secretary - P  
Brooke Marinan, Vice Chair - P  
Dianne Naus - A  
Samantha Smingler – P

**Also present:**

Mark Bauer, Duluth Police Department  
Carl Crawford, Human Rights Officer  
Michaela Mullin, Arc Housing Coordinator  
Amanda Paszak, Guest  
Andy Paszak, Guest  
Ken Beetcher, Guest  
Sofia Panitzke, Guest

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Vice Chair Marinan called the **3/6/24** Commission on Disabilities meeting to order at 3:35pm.

**Approval of March 2024 agenda** (Berner, Johnson)

**Approval of the February 2024 minutes** (Crosby, Berner)

**Current Disability Issues and Announcements**

- Amanda (Guest): Precinct 31 independent voting machine worked flawlessly yesterday

**Accessible Parking Update**

- Duluth Parking Commission meeting Feb, Approved parking requests:
  - 219 S. 60th Ave W.
  - 223 E. 6th St
  - 15 N. 23rd Ave W
- West Superior Street redesign - what attention will be given to accessible parking in the area? Project will include accessible parking spaces, curb cut outs; Officer Bauer has been heavily involved throughout the process.
- Approved by Parking Commission at March meeting:
  - 3008 Vernon St - inaccessible garage, no other off-street parking available

- 2717 W. 9th St - steep-grade driveway, another accessible spot for resident across street
- Annual update on the total number of accessible streets within the City; requests for new spots far outweigh requests for removals. Mr. Crawford recommends all COD Commissioners and guests attend at least one Parking Commission meeting. Mr. Crawford gave accolades that Officer Bauer attends each COD meeting to enhance collaboration for bigger changes.

### **Parks and Rec Report**

- Commissioner Crosby explained her attendance at the Parks and Recreation Commission to collaborate. With her term ending on the COD, that collaboration will need to be defined moving forward. Crosby complimented the Parks and Rec Commission for always considering accessibility in their conversations and development plans.
- New development of potential Spirit Valley Community Center. Opportunity for funding - seeking funding a new facility with community partners. Keep eyes out for more information. Duluthmn.gov Parks and Recreation website has a high-level overview for reference.
- Commissioner Smingler has not seen the Track Chair at Hartley Nature Center. Was at meeting last week, and they said they had not received the chair yet.
- Is Parks and Rec involved in the Lester Park development? They should be.
- Mr. Crawford complimented Commissioner Crosby for her commitment to COD and Parks and Rec Commission.

### **Annual Goals - Updates**

- Commissioner Crosby reached out to Hank Martinsen about the Skywalk access walk. He was invited to this March COD meeting and unable to attend today. Commissioners to follow up regarding the access walk. Commissioner Fochs struggled to navigate Skywalk to this COD meeting today. More signage needed. Ken (Guest) suggested additional braille markers throughout and in elevators, more consistently. Commissioner Crosby suggested to connect with Lighthouse as a partner in creating more accessible signage throughout the Skywalk. Mr. Crawford - what are other municipalities and skywalks doing? Downtown communities are struggling.
- Commissioner Berner to send out COD brochures to providers. Recommended current/new Commission review the brochure for updates.
- Commissioner Smingler asked if the COD has reached out to Mayor Reinert to discuss the Commission. Crosby said this is in the works.
- "R" Word Update: Commissioner Castaldo mentioned at a previous meeting planned meetings with ISD 709 school board members and other updates on R Word Policies. In her absence from the March COD meeting, other Commissioners could not remember the update; will need to check back with Ashlie at the next meeting. Sofia (Guest) discussed her experience in the schools and the lack of correction by teachers when other students mistreated her. Commissioner Berner says schools should be talking about disabilities in terms of equity and advocacy and exposure. It is time to reinvent trainings in the schools.

### **New Business**

- Future of COD - What will happen when Human Rights Officer leaves the City? Mr. Crawford will still be engaged and involved in Duluth in his new role with St. Louis County. Ben VanTassel and/or Laura Laaksonen will be in attendance in the interim.

Commissioner Crosby emphasized the importance of the new Human Rights Officer having knowledge on ADA.

- New Commission members in the queue. Applications need to be approved by Mayor Reinert and then go to City Council for a vote. It was noted that if an applicant selects two Commissions of interest in the application, the application will default to the first choice.
- Library Event “Disability Visibility” to be held on Saturday, April 27 from 12-4pm. Commissioner Crosby noted Arc Northland will have a table at this event. She suggested COD reach out for a table; if the COD cannot have their own table, Amanda offered to share a table with Arc Northland and COD. Commissioner Fochs to staff table, and distribute brochures. Send note to Laura to print additional brochures. Amanda will connect with Stacey R. to arrange a table. Commissioner Johnson to tentatively attend Library event with Allison.
- April 3 COD will proceed as planned.

### **Old Business**

- Mr. Crawford to reach out to DTA about having a seat on the COD. Amanda (Guest) mentioned the application for DTA’s STRIDE is not accessible.

### **Public Comment**

Commissioner Smingler - March into Mentoring with Mentor North, there are currently 64 kids needing mentors. There are youth with disabilities, but also Mentor North is seeking mentors with disabilities. Accepting nominations, and detailed informational events with mentor panels to answer questions. March 25 Lunch and Learn. Mr. Crawford complimented Samantha on her service on the Commission on Disabilities.

Commissioner Berner thanked Carl and Amanda for their time and service.

### **Adjourn** (Smingler, Crosby)

Meeting adjourned at 4:45pm.

### **Next meeting:**

Wednesday, April 3, 2024  
3:30pm - 4:30pm  
City Hall Room 430