



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

**Commissioners Present:** Ashlie Castaldo, Chair; Brooke Marinar, Vice Chair; Christina Johnson, Secretary; Allison Fochs; Jill Isola Johnson; Michelle McDonald; Michaela Mullin

**Commissioners Absent:** Marie Anderson; Amanda Paszak

**Guests Present:** Laura Laaksonen, City of Duluth; Mark Bauer, Duluth Police Department; Jon Rix; Erin Naughton Garrison, Duluth Public Library; Bird Polachek; James Gittemeier, City of Duluth; Elinor Rosenberg

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Vice Chair Marinar called the **10/2/24** Commission on Disabilities meeting to order at 3:31pm.

**Approval of the October 2024 agenda** (Fochs, McDonald)

**Approval of September 2024 minutes** (McDonald, Fochs)

**Current Disability Issues and Announcements**

- Presentation to the City Council/Annual Assessment 10/28/24 at 6:15pm. Chair Castaldo shared a draft of the presentation to the full Commission. Round of applause!
- Rev Up the Vote! Event with Arc Northland. Event was designed to increase voter outreach and civic engagement in the disability community.
- Speed Friending event at Arc Northland Oct. 16 at Clyde - Chair Castaldo to share flyer with COD. Great way to meet others with disabilities.

**Guest Speaker:**

Erin, Duluth Public Library

Disability Visibility fair brought awareness to what the Library could be doing to better enhance accessibility. Erin invited COD to any meetings for input. Ideas discussed:

- Ensuring upstairs desk is always staffed for questions or key to restroom.
- Having a low sensory area is helpful - a corner with darker lighting, a pillow. Upstairs is "the pod" is glassed area that is nearly sound-proof for quiet times.
- Encouraged Erin to review the accessibility event checklist.
- Is there a way guests can scan accessibility resources before their visit? An option to include on the website. Make sure your website is accessible with inclusive design.
- Make sure the elevator is working.

**Accessible Parking Update**

- Accessible push buttons in Medical Ramp is complete. Installed on all doors.
- Approved by Parking Commission:

- 706 N 7th Ave E
- 801 101st Ave W
- 2624 W 4th St
- 3421 W 2nd St
- 117 N 18th Ave E
- Recommended for approval:
  - 322 N 23rd Ave W - valid permit; site visit noted temporary accessible signs used for special events. Replace temporary signage with permanent signage.
- For future Parking Commission meeting, need review:
  - 3419 W 2nd St
  - 1703 and 1721 E 3rd St - three tenants with valid credentials, hoping for additional permits.

## **Parks and Rec Report**

Noted new staff changes and goals.

## **Annual Goals - Updates**

- Involvement in Transportation and City Traffic Accessibility - updates and ideas. Amanda will keep Laura involved in any updates.
- Potential community events: Bentleyville - Would any commissioners like to do a volunteer night? COD to request parking sign be updated from "Handicap Parking" to "Accessible Parking". Better accessibility language. Accessibility in options; making sure there isn't a step or accessibility challenges to our placement. Commissioner McDonald to bring a crew.

## **New Business**

Community member recommended Pacer who works with disability community and advocacy for school district "R" Word conversations.

## **Old Business**

- HOH law enforcement event updates - Chair Castaldo attending meeting this Friday. Event is February 8, 2025.
- Health and Human Services Conference is next week at the DECC

## **Public Comment**

- James Gittlemeier, City Senior Transportation Planner - wants to be in a future agenda to discuss projects and plans. DTA coming to November COD meeting; James invited to attend that same meeting.
- STRIDE is not able to go to Essentia valet drop-off. Presents challenges for appointment arrival. Commissioner McDonald on the DTA Accessibility Commission. Will bring this to them.
- DTA frequent issue when calling for bus info: incorrect directional corner provided for bus stop. DTA rolling out new way to access information on website.
- Confirming that Mayor Reinert's social media now includes captioning.
- Bird - Outfront Minnesota LGBT Duluth policy organizer - want to be more involved.
- Lighthouse is hosting and Open House on October 28 3-6:30.

## **Adjourn**

Meeting adjourned at 4:25pm.

**Next meeting:**  
Wednesday, November 6, 2024  
3:30pm - 4:30pm  
City Hall Room 430

The public is invited to submit written comment to Laura Laaksonen prior to the meeting by [humanrights@duluthmn.gov](mailto:humanrights@duluthmn.gov) or mailing comments to 411 W 1st St, City Hall, Duluth, MN 55802. Please note that all public comment is considered Public Data.