



Commission on Disabilities  
Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes  
February 2, 2022

This Commission on Disabilities meeting was held electronically via WebEx due to the COVID-19 Emergency.

**Commissioners:**

Laurie Berner - P  
Ashlie Castaldo - P  
Roberta Cich – P  
Amanda Crosby - P  
Allison Fochs - A  
Tom Furman - P  
Heath Maki - A  
Dianne Naus - P  
Samantha Smingler – P

**Also present:** Carl Crawford, Mark Bauer, Laura Laaksonen.

Chair Berner called the January, 2022 Commission on Disabilities meeting to order, there was a quorum. Chair Berner announced that Commissioner Maki has resigned from the Commission due to employment conflicts.

**Approval of current agenda: MS/C – (Furman, Castaldo)**

**Approval of January minutes: MS/C – (Cich, Castaldo)**

**Public Comment/Information:** No public comment.

**Accessible Parking Update:**

Officer Mark Bauer provided an update for the Commission. There will be 5 new ADA parking spots reviewed at the next Parking Commission meeting. There are 3 from last month and 2 new ones. All will be recommended for approval.

**Parks and Rec Report:**

Commissioner Crosby reported that the Parks and Rec. Commission has voted on the Brighton Beach Resiliency preliminary design. The conceptual plan can be viewed at <https://duluthmn.gov/media/12488/210260-20211007-lw-bb-report.pdf>. If Commissioners have comments, concerns or questions, please let Commissioner Crosby know. It's good to have these discussions before the construction starts. Commissioner Crosby also

reported that Courage Kenny provided a great presentation about all their programs. They stressed the importance of recreation accessibility and opportunities for people with disabilities.

A concern was brought to the Parks and Rec Commission regarding accessibility of a boat launch at the end of Park Point. The surface is not accessible to people who use wheelchairs. Commissioner Crosby said there are a lot of partners here to reach out to. However, winter is a good time to address this in order to find possible solutions before boating season. Commissioner Crosby will update the Commission on this.

### **Old Business:**

#### **Snow Removal Task Force-**

Commissioner Cich reported on ongoing concerns about snow removal at bus stops. She has reached out to the DTA and City staff regarding this, with no clear answers. DTA staff said that there are about 1300 bus stops throughout the City. Of those, over 100 have shelters. The DTA clears snow from the stops where there are shelters. Keeping the remaining bus stops clear of snow and accessible remains a challenge.

The Commission discussed many suggestions to move forward.

- Commissioners agreed that there needs to more/better communication with the City. We need to determine which department or person we should be talking to. Mr. Crawford will help determine who we should be working with.
- Mr. Crawford brought forward an idea similar to what the Fire Department does with their Adopt a Hydrant program. Encouraging people to adopt a bus stop could be helpful with many bus stops. Mr. Crawford also brought up the idea of offering some incentives for this program.
- Commissioner Smingler pointed out the importance of identifying heavily used stops.
- Commissioners agreed that it is important for snow plows to work with us for anything to be effective.
- Commissioners also agreed that we need to find out 'where the buck stops.' Who is ultimately responsible to keep the bus stops clear? Whose job is it? Where do citizens go if they are having problems at their bus stop?
- Commissioner Cich requested that we bring together the Snow Removal Task Force with City and DTA officials to identify who is legally responsible for clearing these bus stops and how to make it happen.

#### **Brochure-**

The Commission would like to extend a huge thank you to Laura Laaksonen for her work on the brochure. Commissioners liked the layout and the content. There was some discussion about font size and alternative formats. Mr. Crawford and Ms. Laaksonen will check on options.

There was also discussion around where and how the brochures would be used.

- Commissioner Cich moved that the brochure be accepted with the addition of a statement about alternative formats being available upon request and the addition of the Great Lakes ADA website and phone number. **MS/C - (Cich, Castaldo)**
  - o Commissioner Smingler will contact Great Lakes ADA to make sure it's OK to list them.

### **New Business: None**

### **Current Disability Issues:**

Ideas for speakers – Chair Berner asked Commissioners to think about who they would like to have come and speak to the Commission. One idea is the Regional Quality Council through The Arc Northland. The Regional Quality Council could share their new work plan and what they

do in the community. Commissioner Smingler suggested Duluth Age Friendly. This group is working towards an aging friendly community. They are working on a 5 year plan and may have goals in common with the Commission. Commissioners are encouraged to bring additional speaker ideas to the next Commission meeting.

Commission brainstorm session – Chair Berner asked that Commissioners think about areas the Commission should be focusing on or prioritizing in the coming year.

- Mr. Crawford brought forward a question about what people do with Service Animals if they are incarcerated or have to go someplace temporarily. What happens to the Service Animals?
  - o Commissioner Naus relayed the need for someone to be able to provide care for their Service Animal and that may not be possible in some situations. Commissioners mentioned the importance of having an emergency plan. It might also be possible to work with an animal shelter to temporarily help. Commissioner Smingler will ask someone at the Great Lakes ADA Center if they have any other solutions.
- Commissioners brought up the need to focus on accessible, affordable housing. Commissioners would also like to see education and communication with landlords and managers regarding accessibility and reasonable accommodations.

Commissioners are asked to bring additional ideas on where to focus our efforts this year to the next meeting.

**Correspondence/Public Comment:** None.

**Other Business/Announcements:**

Commissioner Cich and Commissioner Crosby were each interviewed by a reporter from MN Public Radio about snow removal efforts and challenges in our community. A link to the story will be shared with the Commission when it becomes available.

Commissioner Naus shared information about the Legal Advocate position opening currently available with the Minnesota Disability Law Center. Commissioner Berner shared that the Executive Director of Arc Northland position is also currently open.

**Adjourn:** 4:30 pm

Next meeting is Wednesday March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2022 3:00 PM  
Location to be determined.