



# CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

## Commission On Disability

### MINUTES

**Meeting Date: November 13, 2023**

**Room: Zoom**

**Time: 6:00PM**

Ruthanne Fuller  
Mayor

Barney Heath,  
Director, Planning &  
Development

Lara Kritzer  
Director, Housing &  
Community Development

Sharon Cullins  
Planner  
Community Development

#### Members

Eileen Sandberg, Co-Chair  
Ima Jonsdottir, Co-Chair  
Jane Brown, Treasurer  
Lucie Chansky  
Petr Chovanec  
Nyree Kibarian  
Nancy Kritzman  
Sandra Lingley  
Barbara Lischinsky  
Jack Lovett  
Matt Volpi

Jason Rosenberg  
Chairman Emeritus

#### Advisor

Sergeant Michael B. Wade  
Newton Police Department

#### Staff

Jini Fairley  
ADA/Sec 504 Coordinator  
617-796-1253

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#### Commission Members Present:

Ima Jonsdottir, Co-Chair, participating remotely  
Eileen Sandberg, Co-Chair, participating remotely  
Jane Brown, Treasurer, participating remotely  
Lucie Chansky, participating remotely  
Petr Chovanec, participating remotely  
Nancy Kritzman, participating remotely  
Sandra Lingley, participating remotely  
Jack Lovett, participating remotely  
Matt Volpi, participating remotely

#### Commission Members Absent:

Nyree Kibarian  
Barbara Lischinsky

#### Staff:

Jini Fairley, ADA Coordinator  
Lara Kritzer, Planning  
Nika Sandal, Planning  
Sharon Cullins, Planning  
Hattie Kerwin Derrick, Mayor  
Bernie McDonald, DPW

#### Guests:

Heather Wood  
Councilor Downs  
Jo-Louise Allen  
Rob Caruso

### 1. Introductions (6:00-6:05)

At the start of the meeting, there was not a quorum, there were 6 members present: Eileen, Ima, Lucie, Jane, Jack, and Matt. Eileen skipped over the approval of the draft of the minutes to the CDBG report.

### 2. Approval of the October 16, 2023 Meeting Minutes (6:05-6:10)

Eileen asked if there were any changes to be made to the draft minutes for October's COD meeting. Hearing none, Jane made a motion to approve the

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minutes as drafted and distributed. Matt seconded the motion. The motion passed by a vote of 8-0-1 (Lucie abstained).

### 3. CDBG Report & FY25 Project Update (6:10-6:25)

Sharon said there were no changes to the CDBG Access Projects report since last month. This report can be viewed on page 7.

3 more members joined the meeting at this point, Sandra, Petr, and Nancy, during the discussion of potential FY25 CDBG funded projects. The list of projects and notes can be found on page 8.

Ima said it will be difficult to choose projects from the spreadsheet if cost estimates are not furnished. Sharon replied that the departments are short-staffed and would prefer to vet and give cost estimates to projects chosen by the COD. But the COD members need to know a ballpark cost estimate in order to choose 3 top projects for FY25. Regarding the Newton Centre curb ramps (12) at Beacon/Langley/Sumner will be costly but would benefit so many people. Jini explained that there is already ARPA funds available but additional funds will be needed. She suggested the COD members vote on at least the 2 curb ramp projects, Newton Centre, and Nonantum, tonight and then DPW can figure the cost estimates and Sharon will figure out the balance from FY24 CDBG-funded project (2 curb ramps and crosswalk with signage on City Hall Drive). For a 3<sup>rd</sup> project, an accessible single-use all gender restroom at the Auburndale Library was recommended by Ima but Hattie said that it wasn't clear if Public Buildings and the non-profit that runs that library are interested in this project this year. Sandra asked if the CIP spreadsheet shown at last month's meeting could be available in hard copy so that it is more readable. Hattie said that she could provide that. Jack asked about the Waban Library, as it was also on the spreadsheet Sharon provided as a potential CDBG project and which projects would have the most impact and benefit for the disability community. Ima said that is a good question and should be considered when voting. Ima explained that Rafik, from Public Buildings, said the Waban library restroom didn't seem feasible. A motion was made by Jack to choose these 3 projects for FY25 CDBG funding: Curb ramps at Watertown & Chapel in Nonantum, Curb ramps in Newton Centre at Beacon/Langley/Sumner, and an accessible restroom on the main floor of the Auburndale Library. Jane seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by a vote of 9-0.

### 4. Accessible Fines Reports (6:25-6:30)

Sgt. Wade was unable to be in attendance due to the wake of a fellow Police Officer, who died last week. There are no Fines reports this month as the new system has not produced these specific reports.

### 5. Snow Operations & Snow Issues for Residents with Disabilities (6:30-7:00 )

**Bernie McDonald, new Director of the DPW Streets Division since January (took over when Shane Mark left city employ), introduced himself and described snow operations, mainly removal of snow from the streets and from sidewalks of routes to schools (priority 1), village centers, and transportation nodes (80 miles of 320 miles of sidewalks). He did this in Waltham for 29 years before coming to Newton. Staff shortages, especially with contractors, have affected the timeliness**

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of snow clearing operations. Eileen explained that often, even after residents have cleared their sidewalk and curb ramp if nearby, are filled in again when the street plows come by again. Having the snow blocking curb ramps can leave residents with mobility disabilities trapped in their homes after snowstorms. Ima expressed the urgency of clearing these blocked curb ramps as the longer the snow stays there, it freezes over and becomes impossible to be removed. Bernie said that the 311 system should be used when this happens, so that DPW can be made aware of a specific area in need of clearing. Snow operations does hand shoveling of curb ramps in village centers and access to transportation, MBTA and bus stops. Bernie assured Ima that if an ADA/curb ramp is blocked and reported, DPW will get out there as soon as possible to provide access to sidewalks and crossings. Sandra mentioned that even in Newton Centre,, the year before last, there was so much snow that it was impossible to get on to the sidewalk at the crosswalk at Beacon & Centre. The merchants do as much as they can, but often what is needed is to actually remove the snow, as there is no place to shovel it to. Lucie asked if the same snowplow driver is assigned to the same streets throughout the winter. Bernie said that the plow contractors do have assigned areas but the drivers can be different, based on availability. , and the same goes for the city employers, they could be out sick or on vacation. Lucie wondered if the plow driver could be in touch with the person who is parked in the accessible parking space out front of their home, so they could move their car just while that street is being plowed. Bernie said that often the plowing operations can take 15-20 hours or more and several passes on each street, and he couldn't answer if that would be possible. Jack asked if Bernie thinks the Winter Overnight Parking Ban is helpful or not, and Bernie replied it is helpful when we get a significant amount of snow in a storm. Jini clarified that in the case of a big storm, a snow emergency can be declared where everyone needs to find a place for their car during those hours. She also clarified that many of the curb ramps blocked is in residential areas, not in the village centers, where residents aren't able to or don't clear the curb ramps, just their sidewalk. Bernie says the 311 system is the best way to report these blocked curb ramps. Lucie asked if there was some way to put heat under the curb ramps, with solar power. Bernie said radiant heat exists but the reliability on many curb ramps would be an issue. Lucie suggested they could look into it for key curb ramps. Eileen asked about whether a list exist of volunteers who could shovel someone's sidewalk who can't do it themselves. Bernie said not too many folks reach out and the youth are not as ambitious as they were 20-30 years ago. Hattie said that Mignonne at Senior Services is looking into finding volunteers for snow shoveling. Ima commented that in Iceland it is common for driveways and sidewalks to be heated but they have good hot water resources, but would really like for DPW to look into it, maybe near and to the Senior Center, and other key buildings/routes. One last reminder and request about snow clearing at schools, that the plows do not leave snow in the accessible parking spaces, nor the route to the sidewalk and entrance to the school, especially including the curb ramps from parking to sidewalk. Bernie will remind Derek Manion at Parks & Recreation who clear the

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schools' sidewalks and parking lots. Ima and Eileen thanked Director McDonald for coming and hearing all the snow issues encountered in the past and he hopes he answered all concerns and gave his email for any issues:

[BernieMcDonald@newtonma.gov](mailto:BernieMcDonald@newtonma.gov).

**6. Co-Chairs' Updates (7:00-7:15)**

Ima attended another Anti-Ableist working group of NPS and the main take away of this meeting is how long it could take to develop and implement this anti-ableist curriculum estimated 3-5 years, as everyone needs the training, not just teachers, but paraprofessionals, administration, specialist, etc. Also, NPS announced the formation of a Disability Advisory Group to advise Asst. Supt. Miller on this new curriculum being developed and many other matters of inclusion, accessibility, and ableism, such as field trips, playgrounds, and more. There is an application process, and this group will be about 10 individuals of which the majority will have diverse (Ima described as mental illness, cognitive, behavioral, emotional, developmental, sensory, physical, etc.) disabilities and the others would have lived experience with disability. Jack said he is intending to apply for this DAG. It was pointed out by several attendees that this DAG or the anti-ableist curriculum is not the same or a replacement for Understanding Our Differences, which provided information and awareness of many disabilities to all the students in elementary school. If this effort of the new curriculum is going to take upwards of 5 years, a whole generation of elementary school students will miss disability awareness education. Ima agrees and has advocated to bring back UOD in the spring to Supt. Nolin, in the curriculum group and in SEPAC meetings and list serve. Ima added that she has been following the Add-Reno and New elementary school buildings underway, at the DRC meetings, which are Countryside, Horace Mann, and Franklin.

**7. Nominations Reminder for COD Election in January (7:15-7:20)**

Eileen reminded members that officer elections are in January and that she is moving out of Newton and January will be her last meeting. Matt, Nominating Chair, outlined the election process, where any COD member can nominate him/herself or some other member for an officer position (2 Co-Chairs and 1 Treasurer), by sending him an email between now and the Jan.8 meeting. And at that meeting, there will also be nominations taken from the floor. The only eligibility criteria is to be a COD member, new or a veteran. You can reach out to the current officers to ask what is involved and the time commitment. Eileen and Ima said being a COD Co-Chair is very rewarding, they have learned a lot.

**8. Winter Overnight Parking Ban (7:20-7:30)**

Since the last COD meeting, the City Council voted to continue the Winter Overnight Parking Ban (WOPB), a 2 year trial of lifting the ban was also turned down, and shortening the WOPB to 2 months to just during Jan. and Feb. did not pass the Public Safety & Transportation Council Committee. However, the possibility of exempting from the WOPB residents with valid disability placard or plates, i.e. they would be allowed to park during the WOPB unless there was a Snow Emergency declared, and in

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this case, residents would need to find a place for their vehicle off street. The December 6 PS&T committee will be discussing this exemption, and what process the Police would like to implement if this exemption was adopted. Jini would like to see if the COD would vote and write an email/letter to support this exemption. There was more discussion but most felt that starting small and simple, to exempt holders of valid disability placards or plates, rather than expanding to PcAs, home care workers, etc., would be best. A motion was made by Jack and seconded by Jane, that the COD members are in favor of this exemption for holders of valid disability placard or plates, except during Snow Emergencies, to the WOPB and for the COD Co-chairs to write and send a letter to the Public Safety & Transportation Committee, expressing the COD's support, before their December 6 meeting. The motion passed unanimously by a vote of 9-0.

**9. Fair Housing Training -Landlord/Tenant-Co-Sponsor? (7:30-7:40)**

Jini informed the COD members of an upcoming training that the Fair Housing Committee (FHC) arranged, to be given by Housing Center of Suffolk Law School, for landlords and tenants, on December 5, virtually. Since Fair Housing Laws also includes accessibility and reasonable accommodation for tenants with disabilities, the Chair of the FHC asked if the COD would like to co-sponsor this training (no cost involved, just to spread the word), along with the FHC and the Newton Housing Authority. A motion was made by Jane and seconded by Sandra to co-sponsor the Fair Housing Committee's training for Landlords and Tenants, to be held on Tuesday, December 5 at 7PM, virtually. The motion passed unanimously by a vote of 8-0 (Petr stepped away).

**10. Treasurer's Report (7:40-7:45)**

Jane, COD Treasurer, gave the Treasurer's report for the month of October. This report can be found on page 9.

**11. ADA Coordinator's Report (7:45-7:55)**

Jini presented her ADA activities and her report can be found on page 10. She highlighted her site visit at Cold Spring Park, walking the Loop Trail with head of the Friends of Cold Spring Park (FOCSP), Alan Nogee. PRC and the FOCSP have done a lot of improvements with signage and making the aqueduct more accessible, removing roots and stones. A little more work needs to be done to make the transition from trail to the small bridges more accessible, and PRC is looking into this.

**12. CIP Projects to Follow (7:55- 8:00)**

Ima described some of the CIP projects, covered last month by Jonathan Yeo, that would be of interest for COD members to follow, such as: The newton Highlands Improvement Project, the Memorial community Playground (located in Oak Hill at the Solomon Schecter School), and 3 elementary schools Countryside, Horace Mann, and Franklin. Ima will be sending out the links to sign up for notifications of meetings for these projects and will send a text file of the spreadsheet shared last month which the print was too small to read.

**13. 2024 COD Event-Discuss Ideas (8:00-8:15)**

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Ima asked for ideas for another COD event like the one organized by Eileen, the very successful Mental Illness Awareness concert by the Me2/ Orchestra . Jane would like to have the Me2/ orchestra back but have more time for the members to speak about their lived experience with mental illness, Jack suggested a panel of individuals with lived experience with diverse disabilities, Nancy suggested an afternoon of art and music, including a local collaborative called Gateway, artists with disabilities showing their paintings/sculptures (featured at Pottery Barn), Ima suggested also involving students with disabilities who are musicians and artists, Jini said that there are dance groups who incorporate wheelchair users, and that the Me2/ organization also has a Choir/Chorus, who could perform. Ima said this would take a lot of coordination to have such an afternoon, and asked the members to bring more ideas to December's meeting, as a decision would most likely need to be made in January.

#### 14. Agenda Topics for Future Meetings (8:15-8:30)

Jack suggested to have someone from NPS Special Services regarding Special Education. Ima offered to contact Supt. Nolin to see if she or someone from Special Ed could attend either the December or January meeting. The Co-Chairs can have this same agenda item on future agendas, not to discuss a new topic, but the opportunity to suggest a topic for a future meeting. Alternatively, any COD member can email the Co-Chairs to suggest/recommend an agenda item.

#### 15. Adjournment (8:30)

The meeting adjourned at 8:40PM.

**NEXT MEETING DATE: December 11, 2023**

The location of this meeting is wheelchair accessible and reasonable accommodations will be provided to persons with disabilities requiring assistance. If you need a reasonable accommodation, please contact the city of Newton's ADA/Sec.504 Coordinator, Jini Fairley, at least two business days in advance of the meeting: [jfairley@newtonma.gov](mailto:jfairley@newtonma.gov) or (617) 796-1253. For Telecommunications Relay Service, please dial 711 or call City Hall's TTY/TDD line at 617-796-1089.



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### Supplemental Materials & Reports

CDBG Report November.pdf

Newton Commission on Disability

CDBG Access Projects Report

November 13, 2023

FY22 McGrath Park Perimeter Path Installation – (CD22-03A; Budget: \$91,300.00; Expended: \$0; Balance: \$91,300.00)

Constructing an accessible perimeter path around Richard McGrath Park.

The LAX practice wall was impacting the perimeter pathway construction. The League was given a deadline for the 3rd of April to fundraise for said wall

and has not responded in time. In lieu of the wall, the pathway will be able to run around the entire perimeter of the park with entry/exits on Washington

St and Myrtle St. Designer is re-assessing the parking lot side of the park as well as reconfiguring the irrigation system and redoing the fence around

the tennis courts to provide an accessible entry. Due to the rise in costs, the pathway cost is higher than expected, and

Parks has requested the Community

Preservation Committee to cover the gap of \$48,000, which they agreed to. With the addition of playable fields, McGrath has become close to a million-dollar

project. The most up to date design of the park and perimeter was presented during the May meeting. DPW is moving forward with arranging all necessary

documentation for the Conservation Commission permit. As they were preparing the Notice of Intent for the Conservation Commission, it came to light that

the pathway exceeds the amount of impervious area allotted, which in turn triggers a necessary stormwater permit that must be completed by DPW. DPW is now

working to identify a funding source for the required drainage systems.

DPW is moving toward final design construction documents and expects to go before the Conservation Commission and out for construction bid this Winter.

No new update.

FY23 Langley/Warren/Chase Crossing – (CD23-03A; Budget: \$100,000.00; Expended: \$0; Balance: \$100,000.00)

Installation of accessible crossings at Langley Rd. and Warren St. This includes a bump out on the northeast corner of the intersection to create the space

needed to install a curb cut to cross Warren St.

DPW has completed the scope of work and concept design for this project. Project was presented at the December 2022 meeting. DPW posted the bid on the

City of Newton's website on January 5th. The bid opening date was January 19th. The contractor chosen was Antonellis Construction. The bid came in just

a little under \$150,000. Construction started on May 30th, 2023, and ended on June 16th. Although the bulk of the project has been completed, there is a vendor

back order. Antonellis Construction is waiting for the push button for the RRFB. It is expected to be in stock mid to late September. In addition, DPW is

waiting for the final as-built inspection and report from the Contractor. The Push buttons have been installed. The contractor submitted an as-built plan,

but there was some comments and are waiting for the contractor to submit the revised as-built plan. No new update.

FY24 City Hall Campus – (Cost Estimate: \$42,000) Two curb cuts to be added to connect folks to the accessible elevator entrance near the Department Head

parking lot. Site visit has been completed. The contractor chosen for this project is Antonellis Construction. Work is set to start on September 9th, 2023.

Antonellis is hopeful that the work will be completed in 2 to 3 days of work. As their work is completed DPW will be responsible for the regrading of

the pavement and striping to keep costs down. Majority of the work has been completed. The contractor needs to install pedestrian crossing signs and DPW

needs to restripe the crosswalks and reset brick to make the work level. No new update.

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Potential CDBG Projects -  
Commission on Disability

*Last Updated:*

*12/5/2023*

Location Name	Address	Type of Project	Staff Notes
Waban Library Accessible Restroom		Public Buildings	Create an accessible restroom for fo
Auburndale Library Accessible Restroom		Public Buildings	Create an accessible restroom for fo
Chapel St./Watertown St.	N/A	Curb Cut	Accessibility improvements. Rob C ment and this has been vetted by DP it has been discussed that with the b with a new allocation plus the rema tion, vetted last year by DPW, and r
Recreation Buildings		Parks	Need site visit to determine scope.
Centre St./Trowbridge Ave.	N/A	Curb Cuts	Curb cuts are out of compliance and tion of a continental sidewalk



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### Treasurer's Report

Given by Jane Brown, Treasurer of the Newton Commission On Disability (COD)

Presented at the November 13, 2023 Newton COD Meeting

As of November 1, 2023, the balances of the COD accounts are as follows:

Account # 5500-335518 H-P. Fines-Disability Commission

Type: Receipts Reserved for Appropriation (These funds have to go before the City Council to be appropriated before being used)

Balance: \$ 76,889.60

Account 01C60218-524090 Set up to purchase accessible play equipment for Williams School Playground

Type: Special Appropriations

Balance: \$10,831.12

Account # 01C10802-513010 Operation Access – Disability Commission

Set up to pay for targeted enforcement of accessible HP Fines violations by the Police

Type: Special Appropriations

Balance: \$3415.38 (Will increase by \$3000 in November)

Account # 01C40128 Set up to pay for RRFB at Langley/Warren/Chase intersection

Type: Special Appropriations

Balance: \$18,000.00

Account # 01C60211 Set up to purchase accessible equipment for Burr School playground.

Type: Special Appropriations

Balance: \$1,537.00

Account#C401083-586005 Set up to purchase and install Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS) units at the Waverly/Tremont intersection

Type: Special Appropriations

Balance: **\$50.50** (8 APS units installed in December 2018)

Account # 0110320-571600 Set up to pay fee for May 7, 2023 Me2/ Concert

Type: Special Appropriations

Balance: \$0.00

Account # 5064D103 Set up in Fall 2015 to receive Community Access Monitor Program fees and pay expenses)

Type: Revolving Account

Balance: \$29**0.00**

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### ADA COORDINATOR'S REPORT

Given by Jini Fairley, ADA/Section 504 Coordinator

Presented at the November 13, 2023 Newton Commission On Disability meeting, for activities during the month of October 2023.

#### Site Visits:

- Cold Spring Park with PRC & Friends of CSP
- Checked out accessibility features at IDP Day at Albemarle

#### Trainings:

- CHAPA Regional
- Webinar- PROWAG for Pedestrian Facilities
- UOD Webinar- Sensory Processing in Children

#### Meeting/Events/Conference Calls:

- Newton Highlands Improvements community meeting
- DRT, DRC/SBC & Working Group meetings- Countryside School
- Harvest Fair- COD table in PM
- DRC/SBC & Working Group meetings -Franklin School Concept Plans
- Met Asst. Supt. Casey Miller with Ima & Eileen
- DRC/SBC & Working Group meetings for Horace Mann addition
- Met with Suffolk Law Housing Center Re upcoming training with FHC Chair
- MassDOT public meeting on Newton Corner Exit 127
- Traffic Council- Accessible parking space moving one space on Washington St. to allow outdoor dining
- FHC Subcommittee on lottery & lease-up of affordable units
- Fair Housing Committee (FHC)- attend monthly meetings
- Complete Streets Committee & Road Paving- attend bi-weekly meetings
- CODs Alliance monthly meeting