



CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Commission On Disability

Meeting Date: July 13, 2020

MINUTES

Room Zoom

Time: 6:00PM * New Start Time

Ruthanne Fuller
Mayor

Barney Heath,
**Director, Planning &
Development**

Amanda Berman
**Director, Housing &
Community Development**

Tiffany Leung
**Planner
Community Development**

Members

Lakshmi Kadambi, Co-Chair
Anne Marie Killilea, Co-Chair
Jane Brown, Treasurer
Warren Abramson
Rob Caruso
Lucie Chansky
Rosemary Larking
Sandra Lingley
Barbara Lischinsky
Girard Plante
Eileen Sandberg
Matt Volpi

Jason Rosenberg
Chairman Emeritus

Advisor

Sergeant Bob Lee, Jr.
Newton Police Department

Staff

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

1000 Commonwealth Ave.
Newton, MA 02459
T 617-796-1240
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This meeting will be a virtual meeting on Zoom, by phone or by computer/iPad:

Join Zoom Meeting

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Meeting ID: 415 115 921

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Meeting ID: 415 115 921

Commission Members Present:

Lakshmi Kadambi, Co-chair, remotely on Zoom
Anne Marie Killilea, Co-chair, remotely on Zoom
Jane Brown, Treasurer, remotely on Zoom
Warren Abramson, remotely on Zoom
Rob Caruso, remotely on Zoom
Lucie Chansky, remotely on Zoom
Sandra Lingley, remotely on Zoom
Barbara Lischinsky, remotely on Zoom
Girard Plante, remotely on Zoom
Eileen Sandberg, remotely on Zoom
Matt Volpi, remotely on Zoom

Commission Members Absent:

Rosemary Larking

City Staff and Advisors Present:

Jini Fairley, ADA/Section 504 Coordinator

Sgt. Bob Lee, Police

Dana Hanson, Mayor's Office

Shelby Booth, The Carroll Center

Stephanie Lapham, Parks, Recreation & Culture

Jennifer Steele, Planning

Claire Rundelli, Planning



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Guests:

Hattie Kerwin-Derrick, Human Rights Commission

Erin Miller, Newton-Wellesley Hospital

Nathan Persampieri

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

Anne Marie began with an apology as to the length of the meeting in June, but hopefully, if all can keep their comments to the time allotted on the agenda, tonight's meeting will be timelier. Cart/Close Captions are being provided. When voting, she asked if members could say their name and then their vote, or if roll call, just say their vote. When the meeting began, 9 members were present (Anne Marie, Lakshmi, Eileen, Rob, Barbara, Sandra, Lucie, Jane, Matt,) and 2 absent (Girard, who arrived later in the meeting, Rosemary).

2. Chair of Human Rights Commission (6:05-6:10)

Hattie Kerwin-Derrick briefly introduced herself as Chair of the Newton Human Rights Commission. She talked about when the HRC meetings are, monthly on the 4th Tuesday, and have reports from the high schools by student members/representatives, the Police Dept., and . The HRC receives complaints of discrimination, which can include discrimination based on disability, and the Commission can be reached by emailing: hrc@newtonma.gov. The Commission is reviewing their ordinance, as all are volunteers, but in the past there was more mediation, and now they focus on education, accuracy of statistics, and ensuring that Newton is a welcoming city to all. She hopes that the 2 Commissions can collaborate on events in the future. At this point, Warren joined the meeting.

3. Approval of 6/8/20 Meeting Minutes (6:10-6:15)

Rob said that his exchange with Tiffany about his suggestion that Girard accompany her at the Cove on her next walk through to review work performed there, was missing from the minutes, as he felt her answer was inappropriate. Jini said that she doesn't transcribe word for word, but rather summarizes discussion, in the minutes. She said she would review and add his suggestion and her answer. Eileen said that the spelling of the last name of the representative from SEPAC was incorrect, it is Carey. Jini

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will correct that. A motion was made to accept the minutes as amended with the addition and the correction, by Jane. Warren seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by a vote of 10-0

Taken out of order (was #14), by Co-chair Anne Marie:

4. August Hiatus (8:25-8:30)

Anne Marie asked if anyone wanted to make a motion to have an August hiatus. Lucie made that motion and Jane seconded the motion. Eileen asked if we had time for a hiatus as there seems there is much to discuss and meetings are long. Rob commented that declaring a hiatus does not necessarily need to be put to a vote, that the Chair or Co-chairs can make that decision. The motion passed by a vote of 9-1 (Rob).

NWH Inclusion Director (6:15-6:35)

Erin Miller, Newton-Wellesley Hospital's new Inclusion Director, described her role at the hospital. Her full title is Equity, Inclusion, and Abuse Prevention Director, which she became about 8 months ago, but she has been with the hospital for 12 years working in the area of domestic and sexual violence prevention. She is on a steep learning curve when it comes to disability justice issues. She sits on a disability task force of all providers in the Partners (now Mass General/Brigham) system, which has helped her immensely. She has accomplished some policies, one that protects staff and providers from any kind of discrimination, including disability, and she has clarified for NWH staff as to the distinction between support persons and visitors, particularly in light of Covid19 in the policies restricting visitors. She has also produced materials for staff to give them more tools to better communicate with patients with disabilities. She is aware of the Commission's initiative to begin a dialogue with NWH with their Compliance Officer, Cathy Block and Dr. Jody Larson, and others and would like to help facilitate future meetings with NWH staff on disability issues facing patients and visitors with disabilities. Lucie commented that Erin assured her, if needed, that her son with disabilities would be allowed a support person if he contracted Covid19. Eileen asked about awareness of hidden disabilities, such as mental illness, autism, hearing loss, or the stress that Covid19 is causing, either exacerbation of a disability or creating mental health issues not present before. She said they are, and their staff are well supported. They are working on their efforts with the community as well, on this front, in a way that is both culturally and linguistically

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appropriate. Erin said that there are not enough mental health resources in the state, and particularly for people of color or who speak a language other than English. They have a thriving Child Psychiatry program but it's not enough. Anne Marie asked what kind of mask is being used by staff at NWH, as he is a Late Deafened adult who uses Cochlea Implants. Erin said that she has secured some transparent surgical masks, but they are in short supply across the country again, not enough. They are looking into producing these types of masks themselves, locally. Sandra asked if the small working group of COD members, who had started meeting with NWH staff last year, could begin that effort again through her. Erin said she would be happy to be the person who helps with that. Girard mentioned that the meeting would have to be a public meeting, open to all, and advertised properly with agenda and follow up minutes.

5. Accessible Playground Mats (6:35-6:55)

Stephanie Lapham, from the Parks, Recreation, and Culture (PRC) Department presented on the accessible rubber mats that she piloted for the AAB and are being used in several parks where wood chips are the primary surface around and under play equipment. Jini had mentioned these last month when the Architectural Access Board approved them as acceptable material as an alternative to Pour-in-Place rubber surface to provide accessible routes to ground level play elements to ramps or transfer platforms to upper level play elements. Lakshmi asked if someone using a walker would get stuck in the center of each square. Stephanie said no, that the circle part is very small, about one inch. Barbara asked if someone using crutches or a white cane where the tip of the cane might get caught. Although Jini did not try that out, underfoot, there was very little depression so it didn't appear that a white cane would get stuck. Stephanie promised to try using crutches to see if there was any issue [note: Stephanie tried the very next day with crutches and there was no issue with either being stuck or tripping]. Rob and Stephanie made a site visit to the play area at Lower Falls' playground, where the photos were taken. Stephanie prepared an estimate of the cost to provide these accessible mats at the Cove. She has already installed these mats at 4 playstructures (Underwood, Hyde (2), Lower Falls) and plans to install at more parks' play structures this summer at Memorial Spaulding, Burr, and Bowen schools). Installing these mats at either Auburndale Cove or other parks could be funded by several sources, such as the Accessible Fines funds, CDBG, or the MOD grant. The total cost of the mats for these 2 contiguous play areas at the Cove would be approximately \$37,000, installation and shipping costs included.

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Jini made the distinction that these accessible mats are not considered accessible play equipment. They provide an accessible route within and under the playstructure.

6. MAAB Variance-Trail Connector (6:55-7:15)

Jennifer Steele and Claire Rundelli from the Planning Department and Environmental Planners presented the reason for the variance application to the AAB. The project is to install box stairs at the Southwestern terminus of the Upper Falls Greenway, to connect to the Charles River Pathway below, approximately 22 feet below, at the Charles River. The stairs will have compliant railings but will be impracticable to provide a coinciding accessible route to these stairs. Photos were shown and explained during their presentation and members were sent all materials in advance of the meeting. To mitigate the 22 foot differential and steep incline (2:1), an accessible pathway would need to be constructed across most of the embankment, where mature trees are providing much of the support for this trail and embankment. A series of switch back walkways, requiring 450 feet in length, or ramps with railings but a little less land, would be required and most of this embankment would have to be cleared of all vegetation. The city has only a small easement for public access on this embankment, and much of the other land is privately owned with conservation restrictions. Claire provided maps showing the trails and the ownership of the river embankment. Jennifer explained how these DCR-approved timber box stairs would be constructed and showed photos of a similar set of stairs connecting 2 trails in Wellesley. The cost to install these stairs is under \$20,000. Lucie asked if other options were explored to provide wheelchair access as the connector between these 2 trails, such as a mechanical lift. Jennifer said they did not, but 2 years prior they applied for a grant to provide a more engineered metal staircase, but was significantly more expensive and beyond the budget. Lakshmi asked how popular these trails, and Jennifer said that both trails have many users of the trails, and even more so during the Covid19 crisis. Claire clarified that they will have enough funds to make the Charles River Pathway accessible, where these stairs would make the connection between these 2 trails. Initially, Lucie made a motion not to support the variance and Rob seconded that motion. However, Jini pointed out that it is very difficult to keep track when a negative motion is made, as not supporting a negative motion really means supporting the variance, and can get very confusing.

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Lucie rescinded the motion and Rob rescinded his second. Matt made a motion to support the variance requested. Jane seconded the motion. The motion passed by a vote of 7-4 (Lucie, Rob, Girard, and Warren).

7. Service Animal Info Sheet (7:15-7:25)

Matt highlighted what his article does, as to the importance of educating the public about the many service animals there are for people with many different disabilities. These are trained animals which help individuals with disabilities to live more independently. His daughter has a service dog that helps her pick up items dropped, who helps her walk upstairs without falling, and many other tasks as her disability causes her extreme fatigue. Barbara commented that the term, ‘seeing eye dog’ is reserved for only dogs raised and trained by the Seeing Eye Dog School in New Jersey. In addition, that term isn’t used anymore; rather more current is either dog guide or guide dog. She also mentioned that it might be helpful to add some other service dogs for people with some hidden disabilities, such as seizure disorder (Epilepsy), Diabetes, and Autism. Jini echoed Barbara comments, suggested a clarification about service dogs to assist some psychiatric disabilities, and maybe adding more links at the bottom of the article for resources. Lakshmi suggested that maybe a photo or two would make the info sheet more visually appealing and she offered her help with that aspect, if Matt would like some assistance. A draft of Matt’s article/info sheet can be found on page 18.

8. 30th Anniversary Events & Materials (7:25-7:40)

Lakshmi presented some different options to advertise the ADA Jeopardy event, with the Mayor ‘standing in’ for ‘Alex’ from the TV Jeopardy show, and she will also give a Proclamation. This very special event will be held on the actual 30th anniversary of the signing of the ADA, July 26, 2020, and she hopes all members will be able to Zoom in. She also wanted to take this opportunity to thank Nathan Persampieri for all his help with the questions and answers, working many hours with Anne Marie, Jini, and herself, so as to make this game very educational and fun. Dana explained the mechanics of the game using Zoom, where it won’t be highly competitive but will be an educational journey. Participants must email to register. A day or two before, they will receive the Zoom link, instructions, and will be pre-assigned to a team. When participants sign into the Zoom meeting/event, a number 1, 2, or 3 will be added to their name in the participant list, to

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represent which team they will be playing for. Participants play individually, raising their hand electronically, and when they get the answer correct, whatever team they are on will get the points. There were a couple of options for the poster/flyer advertising this event for members to choose. Lucie asked if the email link on the poster could be a hyperlink, and Lakshmi will look into that. Eileen offered her help with the answers/questions, asked if only Newton residents could participate – no, anyone can, said Lakshmi. There was a quick roll call vote and the version with the blue lettering was unanimous.

Lakshmi also spoke about the Saturday Sidewalk Studios event that several organizations are sponsoring, including the COD sponsoring a Newton artist with a disability, to create a chalk art design on the carriage way at Commonwealth Avenue and Chestnut St. on Saturday, July 25. Robert Solomon, a disability advocate, has been chosen. Girard spoke highly of Robert's artistic abilities and his advocacy, especially campaigning to make the Newton Highlands MBTA station fully accessible, which will become a reality in 2022. Robert's design will be depicting that station, a T train, and a forklift (representing a mechanical lift now used to assist passengers using a wheelchair to enter the train.

Regarding the brochure, Lakshmi was not able to connect with Jason to get a quote for the history part of the brochure. Instead she is using a quote from a previous report, Jini thought it was from Newton's Comprehensive Plan, and quoted in the Open Space & Recreation Plan. Girard recommended, if there is quotes around it, that the source should also be referenced. Jini and Lakshmi will research a little more to confirm the original report source. Jane made a motion to approve the brochure with the quote identified. Rob seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by a vote of 11-0. A draft of the brochure can be found on page. 20.

9. Girard's Photos & CDBG Report (7:40-7:50)

Girard described his extensive photos he took at the Cove with regard to the pathways which included the FY21 CDBG project. He made it clear he wasn't giving the CDBG report, which was an error on the agenda as to the name of this agenda item. The CDBG report will follow as a separate item in these minutes.

Girard's photos show that the original asphalt pathway that winds through the picnic area and branches off to the fieldhouse and also to the play

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structures are in disrepair. Jini explained that the condition of this old asphalt path does need attention from PRC as a maintenance issue and both she and Tiffany have spoken to PRC's Open Space Coordinator, Luis Perez, to repair. Girard prefers concrete for this pathway so that they will last longer and need less maintenance. Jini explained the scope of this current CDBG project at the Cove, which was to make an accessible route exiting the parking lot to connect to the existing asphalt pathway and to cross the service road, under 20 feet in length. She commented that asphalt and stone dust are the preferred surface materials for pathways in parks. Girard also observed there were some signs missing to indicate accessible parking spaces in the parking lot. Jini will look into that issue with DPW to correct. Barbara commented that his photo shows that one of the new detectable warning pads (there are 3 included in the new CDBG path connector) looks cracked. Sandra commented that it is disappointing that the parking lot is not compliant, that there are signs missing for some of the accessible parking spaces. Girard concluded that the COD members need to scrutinize more carefully any and all access projects, when they are proposed and when they are completed and to include COD members who use wheelchairs as their mobility aid to make a site visit with city staff.

10.CDBG Report

Tiffany was not available for this meeting. All members were sent her report in advance. It can be viewed on page 10.

11.Accessible Fines Reports (7:50-7:55)

Sargent Lee gave 2 reports of Accessible Fines, one for the month of June and one for the entire 2020 fiscal year. These reports can be viewed on pages 14 & 15. Girard commented that Sgt. Lee should not have to wait until the middle to the end of the meeting to give his report that these reports should be presented near the beginning of the meeting. Anne Marie said Girard's suggestion is duly noted and she apologized to Sgt. Lee for the long wait to give his reports. [Found out after the meeting that Sgt. Lee was retiring at the end of July, so this was his last meeting with the COD]

12.Treasurer's Report (7:55-8:00)

Jane stated that there were no changes, since the June COD meeting, to the balances of the COD accounts. The Treasurer's Report can be viewed on page 16.

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13.ADA Coordinator’s Report (8:00-8:05)

Jini gave a brief report of her activities. One more recent development is that she is attending the Police Reform Task Force as one of the city staff resources to this task force. Her report can be viewed on page17.

14.Ideas for FY22 CDBG Access Projects (8:05-8:20)

Anne Marie asked for suggestions. Girard suggested that a concrete pathway be constructed at the Auburndale Cove Park and that the signs be installed to indicate where accessible parking spaces are located in this park’s parking lot.

15.Quarterly Meeting with Mayor (8:20-8:25)

Anne Marie and Lakshmi gave a brief description of their meeting with the Mayor. Barbara was invited but at the last minute wasn’t able to join the meeting. Many topics were covered, such as the Police Reform Task Force, education, membership, and upcoming ADA events. Dana gave more details about the Police Reform Task Force, which is not a public body but rather an advisory group to the Mayor, but the Chair will have opportunities for public engagement throughout the task force’s 8-month duration.

16.Adjournment (8:30)

There was a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:50PM.

NEXT MEETING DATE: September 14, 2020

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 or (617) 796-1253. For Telecommunications Relay Service, please dial 711 or call City Hall’s TTY/TDD line at 617-796-1089.

Reports:

**Newton Commission on Disability
CDBG Access Projects Report
July 13, 2020**

FY20 Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs) – (CD20-03A; Budget: \$63,719.32; Expended: \$63,719.32; Balance: \$0) The COD voted to allocate FY20 architectural access funds for the installation of four sets of RRFBs at the following intersections: Centre Street/Pleasant Street; Christina Street; Lincoln Street/Chester Street; and River Street/Elm Street. Dagle Electrical Construction Corp. was awarded the contract. **Staff and DPW conducted a site visit at the four intersections. Staff has confirmed the crosswalk on Christina Street was restriped. Staff has paid the final bill, and this project is closed out.**

FY20 Park Pathway Installations – (CD20-03B; Budget: \$30,500; Expended: \$9,806.90; Balance: \$20,693) The COD voted to allocate FY20 architectural access funds for the installation of accessible pathways to play structures across the City. Locations are Auburndale Playground (The Cove), Weeks Field, and West Newton Common. **Staff and Parks & Rec conducted a site visit at the three sites.**

In regard to The Cove, the scope of work for this project was to create a connecting route that would lead pedestrians to the existing asphalt path, that was previously funded by CDBG, and the asphalt path would ultimately lead pedestrians to the newly renovated play structures. Prior to the project, there was no transition or connecting route. As individuals leave the parking lot, there was a sloped asphalt patch that disappeared into a gravel, foot path. This project created a 26-linear-foot even, asphalt connecting route with the installation of two tactile warning pads: one pad as individuals left the parking lot and another as individuals approached the service road. There was a third tactile warning pad installed that alerted pedestrians that they were leaving the service road and approaching the existing asphalt path. Please see photos below.

The existing asphalt path is a bit uneven and does require maintenance. However, it is outside of this project's scope of work and maintenance is not CDBG-eligible. Staff has alerted the Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture of this issue as maintenance falls under their responsibility.



Above: Existing conditions including a sloped asphalt patch that disappeared into a gravel, foot path.



Above: Existing conditions including a sloped asphalt patch as individuals leave the parking lot.





Above: CDBG supported the installation of an even, asphalt connecting route with the installation of two tactile warning pads: one pad as individuals left the parking lot and another as individuals approached the service road.

FY21 Curb Cut – (CD21-03C; Budget: \$71,442.33; Expended: \$0; Balance: \$71,442.33)

The COD voted to allocate architectural access funds for the installation of curb cuts at the following intersections: Watertown Street and West Street, Watertown Street and Edinboro Street, Centre Street and Trowbridge Street. **The City has not yet received its FY21 CDBG funds. There is a delay as HUD has prioritized CARES Act funds in response to COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, HUD has not approved the City's FY21-25 Consolidated Plan and FY21 Annual Action Plan. In the meantime, staff is working with DPW to prepare a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA).**

NEWTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

NEWTON COMMISSION ON DISABILITY

PARKING TICKET AND FINES REPORT

JUNE 2020

TOTAL NUMBER OF TICKETS ISSUED	7
TOTAL VALUE OF TICKETS ISSUED	\$ 1,400.00
REDUCTION AMOUNT	\$ 800.00
TOTAL AMOUNT PAID	\$ 400.00
TOTAL OUTSTANDING	\$ 200.00

CODE # 26 ACCESSIBILITY SPOTS

NUMBER OF TICKETS ISSUED	6
TOTAL VALUE	\$ 1,200.00
REDUCTION AMOUNT	\$ 800.00
TOTAL AMOUNT PAID	\$ 400.00
TOTAL DUE	\$ 0.00

CODE # 27 CURB CUTS

NUMBER OF TICKETS ISSUED	1
TOTAL VALUE	\$ 200.00
REDUCTION AMOUNT	\$ 0.00
TOTAL AMOUNT PAID	\$ 0.00
TOTAL DUE	\$ 200.00

NEWTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

NEWTON COMMISSION ON DISABILITY

PARKING TICKET AND FINES REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2020

As of June 30th, 2020

FY 2020 Year-to-date Parking Ticket Totals

TOTAL NUMBER OF TICKETS ISSUED	343
TOTAL VALUE OF TICKETS ISSUED	\$ 69,600.00
REDUCTION AMOUNT	\$ 25,000.00
TOTAL AMOUNT PAID	\$ 38,005.00
TOTAL OUTSTANDING	\$ 7,140.00

CODE # 26 ACCESSIBILITY SPOTS

NUMBER OF TICKETS ISSUED	243
TOTAL VALUE	\$ 49,300.00
REDUCTION AMOUNT	\$ 20,800.00
TOTAL AMOUNT PAID	\$ 23,855.00
TOTAL DUE	\$ 5,025.00

CODE # 27 CURB CUTS

NUMBER OF TICKETS ISSUED	100
TOTAL VALUE	\$ 20,300.00
REDUCTION AMOUNT	\$ 4,200.00
TOTAL AMOUNT PAID	\$ 14,150.00
TOTAL DUE	\$ 2,115.00

Treasurer's Report

Given by Jane Brown, Treasurer of the Commission On Disability

Presented at the July 13, 2020 COD Meeting

As of July 10, 2020, the balances of the COD accounts have not changed since the June meeting and 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: \$61,939

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: \$1880.89

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 #13D10901 Set up in Fall 2015 to receive Community Access Monitor Program fees and pay expenses)

Type: Revolving Account

Balance: **\$940.00**

ADA COORDINATOR'S REPORT

Given by Jini Fairley, ADA/Section 504 Coordinator, and presented at the July 13, 2020 COD meeting.

Site Visits:

- **RRFB locations (4) funded with CDBG funds with Tiffany**
- **Pathways to playstructures in 3 locations with Tiffany & Luis**
- **Elm & Washington St.- with Terry and Isaac to view sight lines at this intersection**
- **Lyons Park to look at possible accessible routes from street parking to bleachers and concession stand/restrooms, with Luis and Alfredo**

Trainings:

- Webinar: Chapter 6 of ADA/ABA Standards
- Webinar on The ADA, Addiction, Recovery, and Employment
- Webinar on Common Sources of Confusion in the ADA Standards
- Webinar on Beyond Codes & Regulations: What is and is not Working in Accessible Design
- Webinar on Buying Websites, Technology, & Tech Services: Tools & Tips for Accessible Procurement
- Webinar – 2 Part series on the Basics of the 2010 ADA Standards
- Webinar on The ADA Interactive Process- The Key to Compliance
- Webinar on Effective Communication with Deaf Offenders in Corrections & Law Enforcement
- Webinar on ADA Coordinators: Office of One-Doing More with Less
- IHCD Lunch & Learn- Interview with Judy Heumann

Meeting/Events/Conference Calls:

- Quarterly Meeting with Mayor with COD Co-chairs
- Programs & Services Council Committee on NewCAL
- NewCAL- every other week meeting
- Mass Commission for the Blind (MCB) Town Hall on Zoom
- Fair Housing Committee- I attend this monthly
- Complete Streets Committee & Road Paving- I attend every week
- CODA- monthly meeting- on phone with other CODs and ADA Coordinators
- West Newton & Newtonville Streetscapes Working Group- every other week updates

Service dogs are a more common sight these days, but many people don't really understand the many reasons someone may use a service dog, or the important rules governing their presence in public places. These working animals help individuals with a variety of disabilities live their lives more independently and provide numerous benefits to those with a legitimate need.

There are several types of service dogs. Service dogs for visually impaired people (sometimes referred to as seeing-eye dogs) are best understood by the general public. They ensure their owners can safely navigate streets, sidewalks, public transportation, and buildings, helping their handlers avoid obstacles and vehicles while finding stairs, entranceways, and curb cuts.

Service dogs that assist individuals with mobility issues are also increasingly common. These dogs will retrieve and deliver items, open and close doors, and perform other tasks for people who may be physically unable to do those things or greatly benefits from the help. While these dogs are often associated with folks using mobility aids such as wheelchairs, there are plenty of people with "invisible disabilities" that rely on them as well.

Hearing dogs are another category of service dogs. These animals are trained to alert their handlers when they hear specific sounds, such as smoke and fire alarms, doorbells, timers, and car horns.

The fourth type of service dog is for individuals suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or other mental, emotional, and behavioral disabilities. These dogs are able to help these people go out in public when they otherwise wouldn't feel comfortable doing so, as well as wake them up if they're having nightmares, apply deep pressure during upsetting situations, and create a physical separation between their handler and other members of the public.

ADA protection

Service dogs differ from other "working dogs" in some key ways. First of all, under the Americans with Disabilities Act, individuals and their service dogs have public access rights, which means they can take them almost anywhere. Other than a few special circumstances, their access cannot be legally denied.

Therapy dogs and emotional support animals do not have the same level of protection and access rights, and for good reason. Service dogs go through extensive training to not only perform specific tasks for their handlers, but also to behave properly in public and not draw attention to themselves when they're not working.

Under the ADA, if someone attempts to enter a public place where dogs normally aren't allowed, there are only two questions that can be asked:

- Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability?
- What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?

Unfortunately, confusion and deception have also led to a rise in service dog fraud. People will try to take their pets places by putting fake vests on them or getting phony online certificates. This makes it harder for people with legitimate reasons to use a properly trained service animal, and it creates a public health issue as these dogs aren't always well behaved and could attack other people or legitimate service dogs.

Our story

Our family got a service dog for our daughter, who has a neuromuscular disease. She fatigues easily, needs to rest often, and normal everyday tasks such as bending over to pick something up off the floor are much harder for her than a typical person. Her service dog can help her tasks such as retrieving items, helping her up the stairs, or getting up into a standing position.

And, because she has to rest often and misses out on many traditional activities that her peers participate in, she has a companion to keep her company. Service dogs also make a great ice breaker for people with disabilities, as people who may be uncomfortable approaching someone will be more likely to engage when there's a dog involved.

We got our service dog from Canine Companions for Independence, which has been providing service dogs free of charge since the 1970s. All the dogs are bred, raised, and professionally trained to be service dogs, ensuring they're properly behaved, have the right temperament, and hopefully lead long healthy working lives.

Our service dog has changed our lives for the better. My daughter is able to conserve her energy for important tasks and she's never lonely. We take the dog everywhere, and she's made my daughter's many medical appointments and procedures far less stressful for everyone.

How to approach someone with a service dog

Service dogs may be dogs, but they are also medical equipment. That's why it's important to never try to pet a service dog, offer it a treat, or call it over to you without first speaking with the handler. Even if it may not look like the dog is working, it may be providing an essential service and shouldn't be distracted.

You can, however, talk to the person who is handling the service dog. They're usually happy to talk to you about the dog and what it does for them. Remember when you're interacting with them to speak to the person and not the dog!

After speaking with them, you may ask to pet the dog, but don't be surprised or offended if they decline. When dogs are working, it's important they stay on task. It's really up to the handler whether they think it's a good idea and appropriate time and location.

Remember, service dogs are not pets! Sure when they're "off duty" they still get to be dogs, but when you see them with a vest or harness or in a public place you should treat them with the same respect you would treat anyone who's trying to get their work done.

For more information on service dogs, visit <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/about-service-and-assistance-animals>

COD Brochure-draft:

History

Formed in 1975, the Newton Commission On Disability (COD), (formerly The Mayor's Committee for the Environment of the Handicapped, The Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities) was chaired by attorney Jason Rosenberg for over 30 years.

The work of the Commission slowly but surely changed the landscape of Newton by addressing accessibility and removing physical barriers with curb cuts for sidewalks, ramps for buildings, accessible pathways in parks, Accessible Pedestrian Signals, for persons with disabilities. Since the beginning of the federally funded Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, the COD has recommended the expenditure of millions of dollars in access projects to benefit people with disabilities, and create a safer and more welcoming environment for all Newton residents. The COD, under the leadership of Girard Plante and Rob Caruso who followed Jason Rosenberg as the Commission Co-chairs, successfully advocated with the city to hire the city's first full time ADA coordinator in 2015.

Mission

The Newton COD's mission is to foster equal access to community life and activities for people with disabilities. Through education and advocacy, the Commission works to raise disability awareness and the importance of increased accessibility to programs, housing and facilities in municipal and commercial buildings, and other public entities.

Purpose

The purpose of this Commission is to cause the full integration of people with disabilities. In accordance with Newton ordinance (Z74 and MGL Chapter 40, 8J, Section 22G), the COD shall:

- (a) research local problems of people with disabilities;
- (b) advise and assist municipal officials and employees in ensuring compliance with state and federal laws and regulations that affect people with disabilities;

The City of Newton recognizes that in order to grow as a community it needs the full participation of persons with disabilities.

- (c) coordinate or carry out programs designed to meet the problems of people with disabilities in coordination with programs of the Massachusetts Office on Disability;
- (d) review and make recommendations about policies, procedures, services, activities and facilities of departments, boards and agencies of the city as they affect people with disabilities;
- (e) provide information, referrals, guidance and technical assistance to individuals, public agencies, businesses and organizations in all matters pertaining to disabilities;
- (f) coordinate activities of other local groups organized for similar purposes.

The COD promotes adherence to Federal, State and City laws and regulations that prohibit discrimination against people with disabilities such as:

- The Americans with Disabilities Act
- Sec. 504 of the Rehabilitation Act 1973
- MA Architectural Access Board
- Fair Housing Act as amended

CDBG Access Projects

The COD analyzes project priorities and provides recommendations for use of CDBG funds in projects that remove architectural barriers and increase accessibility throughout the City of Newton. Here are some samples of projects undertaken through the years:

- Installation of accessible restroom- Hyde Community Center
- Installation of automatic entrance doors -Newton Free Library
- Installation of exterior entrance ramp- Auburndale Library
- Installation of Exterior Porch lift -NWW
- Creation of accessible asphalt pathways- Newton Centre and Newton Highlands Playgrounds.
- Creation of an accessible all gender restroom- Newton City Hall
- Installation of Accessible Pedestrian Signals- in all signalized intersections.
- Installation of RRFB's (Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon)- mid block crosswalks
- Accessible Trails at Dolan Pond, Flory's Path



Photo of exterior entrance ramp at the Auburndale library

Commission meetings

The COD typically meets on the 2nd Monday of each month at 6:00pm on the 2nd floor of Newton City Hall. Meeting agenda and minutes can be found on the COD webpage- www.newtonma.gov/cod

The COD is a thirteen-member commission where the majority of the members are persons with diverse disabilities. All members are residents of Newton.

Contact

The city's ADA coordinator staffs the Commission On Disability and ensures equal access to facilities, programs, activities and services. For more information contact Newton's ADA Coordinator at,

Email: adacordinator@newtonma.gov

Phone: (617)-796-1000

Address: Newton City Hall,
1000 Commonwealth Avenue,
Newton Center, MA, 02459



Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons at Newton Centre

Newton Accessible (HP) Parking Information

In Massachusetts, where can the holder of a valid disability placard/ plate park?



- In authorized parking spaces signed with the International Symbol of Access (ISA).
- In a metered parking space at no charge and no time limit.

Violation Fines

\$200 First Offense - Parking in an accessible parking space without a valid disability placard or plate.

\$300 Second Offense and Repeated offense

\$200 First Offense Blocking curb cut/ ramp

\$300 Second Offense and Repeated offense

The Commission receives and administers fines from violations of the Disability Parking Laws under Section 22G. Funds collected pursuant to this law is kept in a separate account and shall be used solely for the benefit of persons with disabilities.

Massachusetts White Cane Law M.G.L. c. 90 section 14A: Whenever a blind pedestrian, guided by a guide dog or carrying a raised or extended cane that is white or white tipped with red, attempts to cross a street, drivers must stop for the dog or cane user.

An accessible copy of this leaflet is readily available upon request.

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Disability Icons

Commission On Disability Newton, MA

