



CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Commission On Disability

Meeting Date: September 14, 2020
Room Zoom
Time: 6:00PM * New Start Time

MINUTES

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 Dan Devine
Newton Police Department

Staff

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

1000 Commonwealth Ave.
Newton, MA 02459
T 617-796-1240
F 617-796-1254

This meeting will be a virtual meeting on Zoom, by phone or by computer/iPad:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/415115921>

Meeting ID: 415 115 921

One tap mobile

+16465588656,,415115921#

Dial by your location

+1 646 558 8656

Meeting ID: 415 115 921

Commission Members Present:

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:

Lakshmi Kadambi, Co-chair

City Staff and Advisors Present:

Jini Fairley, ADA/Section 504 Coordinator

Sgt. Dan Devine, Police

Dana Hanson, Mayor's Office

Shelby Booth, The Carroll Center

Guests:

Donna Turner, Curve Street

Beth Black, Wellon Montessori School



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Tyrone Hooks
Nancy Krintzman

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

Anne Marie opened with the roll call. All were present except for Lakshmi, who is in India attending her mother’s funeral, Lucie, and Rosemary, who will be joining shortly. Anne Marie went over the Zoom etiquette, which was emailed to members in advance of the meeting. She asked for patience as she works with Close Captions which are provided on a separate website than Zoom. She said that Matt has graciously offered to help out, if needed, during the meeting.

2. Approval of 7/13/20 Meeting Minutes (6:05-6:10)

Hearing of no changes to the 7/13/20 minutes, Anne Marie asked for a motion to approve. Jane made the motion to approve, Warren seconded the motion. The motion passed by a vote of 8-0-1 (Girard abstained).

3. CDBG Access Projects Report (6:10-6:15)

Tiffany gave her CDBG Access Project report which can be viewed on page 10. Barbara asked why the cost estimate changed for the curb cut project. Tiffany explained that at the time for the project to be voted upon, DPW gave an initial estimate but the final estimate and survey was done after the March meeting when the surveyor was back from a medical leave of absence. Girard brought up concerns he had about the Park Pathways project, mainly the condition of the existing asphalt path and also that some accessible parking signs were missing in the parking lot. Tiffany said that the existing asphalt park path was not part of the scope but in the final inspection of this project, the unevenness of this existing path needs to be improved and was pointed out to Luis, Open Space Coordinator for the Parks, Recreation, & Culture (PRC) department to put this maintenance issue in their operating budget. Jini added that she is working on rectifying the missing signs for the 2 accessible parking spaces that Girard included in his photos.

4. Access Project Ideas for FY 2022 CDBG Funds (6:15-6:20)

Tiffany mentioned that the curb cut locations developed back in 2014 and found and listed in Jini’s April ADA Coordinator’s report, have either been renovated or in progress, or in the CIP to be improved. Tiffany’s presentation is a project idea, in cooperation with PRC. To provide a

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perimeter pathway around the fields of the Richard McGrath park, located next to Warren House, at 1600 Washington St. This presentation can be viewed on page 11. (Rosemary joined the meeting at this point). The pathway proposed is approximately a half mile, which also includes 2 access points besides from the sidewalk next to the driveway into the park. Barbara has been proposing this idea previously and is in favor of this project. Sandra asked if it is possible for a pathway be provided where the accessible parking is located, instead of traveling behind parked cars. Tiffany said that she will look into that possibility with PRC. Jini asked for the initial estimate from PRC, and she replied that it is \$50,000 for a stone dust pathway. Girard suggested another project, curb cut improvements at Beacon, Langley, and Sumner Streets in Newton Centre commercial area. Rob added that he has taken photos of this intersection. Barbara said she had it on the original list which Jini had no record. Jini will also check in with DPW to see if this particular intersection is on the CIP or planned as a project. Sandra said she had a list of streets/intersections for improved accessibility, she will send to Anne Marie and Lakshmi and copy Jini and Tiffany. At this point in the meeting, Lucie joined the meeting.

Sgt. Devine's Introduction (6:20-6:25)

Sgt. Devine introduced himself, who is replacing Sgt. Lee as the COD advisor from the Police department, as Sgt. Lee retired at the end of July. Sgt. Devine has been on the Newton Police for 15 years in the Traffic Bureau and also organizes an annual event for children and adults with Developmental Disabilities to visit the Police station and get to know the Police officers. He mentioned a voluntary database maintained by his department where either children or adults with Developmental Disabilities can register, so that the Police know that they might need a little help, maybe getting home, or some other way the Police officers can assist.

5. Accessible Fines Reports (6:25-6:30)

Sgt. Devine gave the following Fines reports, which can be viewed on pages 12 and 13. Although tickets are being issued for accessible parking violations, many other parking enforcement rules have not resumed. In addition, due to Covid19, there are more 'regular' parking spaces for folks to use, which continues to be the case, so fewer drivers are parking in accessible spaces or blocking curb cuts. Since July 1, 2020, the beginning of the 2021 fiscal year, only 5 tickets were issued for accessibility violations.

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Sgt. Devine said activity is picking up, and he reminded all at this meeting that they can call the Traffic Bureau and report if they see a vehicle parked in an accessible space or blocking a curb cut. An officer will respond, but sometimes the vehicle has already moved on.

6. Treasurer's Report (6:30-6:35)

Jane, COD Treasurer, gave the Treasurer's report which can be viewed on page 14.

7. ADA Coordinator's Report (6:35-6:40)

Jini summarized her activities for the past 2 months, very busy, and her report can be viewed on page 15. Girard mentioned that advocates sued the Federal Government, under Section 504, to provide ASL Interpretation for the President's Press conferences. The advocates won and now, as of the beginning of September, an ASL Interpreter is signing at the President's press conferences.

8. Accessible Parking Space Request (AP2-20) (6:40-6:55)

Donna Turner, of 12 Curve Street, requested an accessible parking space on the residential street where she lives. Since there is no parking allowed on her side of the street, she asked for the accessible space be provided across the street from her house at 9 Curve St. She does not have a driveway for her home, but has been assigned a parking space behind the Myrtle Baptist Church. Ms. Turner told us that she has Multiple Sclerosis, uses a walker or crutches as her mobility aid. The space behind the church is too far for her to walk to park or retrieve her car. The neighbor across from her does have a driveway which has space for both of their cars. Lucie pointed out that there may not be enough space for both her and her neighbor at 9 Curve Street to fit their cars between the driveways, as there must be 5 feet clearance on either side of a driveway. There was some discussion as to whether Ms. Turner has sought a reasonable accommodation from Myrtle Village to possibly park in the driveway space that is a 20 minute drop off space for all the residents in this relatively new housing complex. She has asked NCDF, who manages the property, and was denied, and it was suggested she also ask the Myrtle Village Association to convert one of the drop off spaces (located within the Myrtle Village Complex) as a permanent, which, if granted, would be a parking space in

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the winter during the overnight ban. Lucie made a motion to support this request for an accessible parking space on Curve Street, across from 12 Curve St. Rob seconded the motion. The motion passed by a vote of 9-1 (Barbara voted No, Eileen had to leave the meeting early).

9. MAAB Variance Application-72 Crescent Ave (6:55-7:15)

Beth Black, Head of School of Wellon Montessori School, explained the reason for the variance. Their school was expanding to the Sacred Heart Parish Convent building, as the school is a tenant, where Sacred Heart Parish has just completed renovations to make the first floor of that building fully accessible. Due to Covid19, the spacing needed between students in the first floor classrooms will necessitate to spread out to the second floor, which is not yet accessible. Sacred Heart Parish was willing to also rent this space on the second floor just while the school needs it because of Covid19 protocols. So this is a temporary variance for that time period only. The building does have a working elevator to the second floor, but is old and smaller than now required, but could be used if wheelchair access was needed. However, Ms. Black said that any student needing the accessible toilet room and any other accessible features would be located on the accessible first floor. Jini said that this variance application was submitted to the MAAB in mid-August, has already been reviewed by the MAAB, who granted the waiver for the school year. Rosemary made a motion to support this variance request. Jane seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by a vote of 10-0.

10. Warren's Information Idea (7:15-7:20)

Warren told the members about a realtor friend, who works with people with disabilities, who works with a company that helps automate homes/apartments for people with disabilities, to become 'touchless', or a simple pushbutton, or remotely, mostly through electronics. He wanted to know if the members would like to hear from the CEO of the company, Level Up Your Home. Everyone was enthusiastic to hear about what this company does and how they provide the service. A motion was made by Rosemary to have them attend. Warren seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by a vote of 10-0. Warren will invite the realtor and the CEO of the company to a future meeting.

11. Ideas for FY21 MOD ADA Municipal Grant (7:20-7:35)

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Jini asked for ideas for a construction project, improving accessibility/removal of architectural barriers , for the MOD Municipal ADA Improvement grant. The grant is due on October 9, at 5PM, so much of the information for the project should be readily available. In addition, the project needs to be almost shovel-ready, as it has to be accomplished between January and June. One idea that Jini had which the members heard about at the July meeting, was asking for grant funds to retrofit at least 3 playgrounds in the parks. In July, Stephanie Lapham, from PRC, presented the cost estimate of purchasing, delivering, and installing “GRASSMATS” which the AAB recently approved as an acceptable accessible material to provide in and around a play structure. The 2 playgrounds are at the Auburndale Cove, and that estimate for both was about \$37,000. Lucie wondered if this grant can be an educational campaign or a PR campaign, hire someone to conduct a PR campaign. Jini answered that it has to be a construction project, mostly barrier removal. Rob asked if there is a minimum or maximum amount of the grants awarded. Jini said that the maximum amount awarded is \$250,000, usually only one at this amount, and there is no minimum and the range varies up to close to the maximum. Rob said he would be very much in favor of a grant for the accessible mats. Jini said that any other ideas can be emailed to her during the remainder of the week.

12.RIDE Issues-Rosemary (7:35-7:50)

Rosemary described a trip she took using The Ride to Auburndale Cove Park with her PCA and husband, this summer. The Ride did not return at the time given to Rosemary after their visit to the Cove. There was a Police Officer at the park and he tried to call The Ride for almost 2 hours and no one answered. It was getting very late, so her husband decided to walk home. Rosemary called the Police to find Donald, who uses a walker, to give him a ride home as it was about 3 miles away. By 9PM, when The Ride never showed up (pickup time was 5:20), she and her PCA made their way home in the dark, which took nearly an hour. She would like the Commission to write a letter to The Ride. This can't continue, now her husband is terrified to go on The RIDE, terrified that they won't come back and bring them home. Another incident that happened today, Rosemary added, when the RIDE driver wouldn't allow her, her husband, and her PCA, as he said The RIDE can only take 1 person at a time! That may be true, but the 3 of them are one party, and the RIDE driver who took them

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to the doctor's office had no problem with this. Rosemary has called and complained, and The RIDE are blaming the new software they just switched to for reservations and dispatch. Girard suggested also sending the letter/formal complaint to RTAG, which is an advocacy/advisory group to The RIDE and the MBTA's fixed route system, which replaced the AACT in previous years. Anne Marie suggested perhaps Girard and Rob, with their writing talents and experience also with The RIDE, might help draft a letter with Rosemary's input, which they agreed. Jane made a motion that a letter is drafted and is presented to the Commission next month to be approved and sent to The RIDE. Both Rosemary and Girard seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by a vote of 10-0. At this point, there was noise interference from a loud TV or radio, so all were muted, and each will unmute when speaking or voting.

13. Nominating Committee (7:50-8:00)

Anne Marie asked the members of the Nominating Committee if they are still willing to serve for the upcoming COD Officer election in January. They all agreed, Matt, Jane, and Rosemary, and Matt will still chair this standing committee. Anne Marie asked if Barbara wanted to serve this year, as she had to step off last year due to health concerns. She thanked Anne Marie, but she will not be able to serve this year, either. Sandra asked if there is a description of what a Nominating Committee is to do. Rob said that Robert's Rules of Order has the tasks for a nominating committee, but is not yet on the COD webpage. Anne Marie and Lakshmi received training on Robert's Rules of Order and could circulate the information about a nominating committee.

14. NWH Committee (8:00-8:15)

Anne Marie asked who still wants to be on this committee. Of the members present, Anne Marie, Girard, Sandra, Rosemary, and Warren are still interested to be on this committee. Eileen was originally on the committee, so the chair will check with her. Going forward this committee will be an open public meeting, and Jini will work with the chair and schedule with Erin Miller, from NWH, who came to the COD meeting in July. Nancy Krintzman, who was in attendance offered to be a liaison or a member of this committee, as she serves on the NWH's Patient and Family Advocacy Council, and works with some of the same people that this committee met with last year. Barbara was very upset and frustrated that no progress has

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been made in getting NWH to install an RRFB or a STOP sign that flashes, in order to make the very wide driveway safer, which she crosses every day. A motion was made by Warren to reconvene this committee going forward. Girard seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by a vote of 10-0. Sandra volunteered to be the Chair of this NWH Committee.

15. Matt's Service Animal Info Sheet (8:15-8:20)

Matt said he made the changes requested at the last meeting. Jini added that she is sorry to have emailed it only today but a couple of suggestions from Lakshmi should be noted. Lakshmi is working on a layout of this pamphlet and she wondered if Barbara would like to give a quote for the pamphlet. If there are any additional changes, let the Co-chairs know during the month, and the pamphlet will be voted upon next month. The current draft can be viewed on page 16.

16. Wrap Up of July ADA Events (8:20-8:30)

Jini 'stood in' for Lakshmi letting the members know how the Saturday Sidewalk Studios event went, with the COD-sponsored artist, Robert Solomon. He was there pretty much all day and did a fantastic street mural, on the carriage way at the intersection of Chestnut St. and Commonwealth Avenue. She visited the artist, as did Lakshmi and Anne Marie, while the creation unfolded, and she visited it on Sunday, too. It lasted a few days until a rainstorm washed it away. A great success and fantastic rendition in celebration of the 30th Anniversary of the ADA.

Anne Marie talked about how much fun the ADA Jeopardy game was on Zoom and the fantastic and generous contribution of the Mayor as 'Alex' of the TV show. It was a great collaborative project and many thanks to Lakshmi and Nathan Persampieri. Team 1 won the event! Next time we will hopefully have more time to advertise the event so more of the community can join in. The COD also received a beautiful proclamation from the Mayor and the city of Newton.

17. Adjournment (8:30)

This meeting adjourned at 8:35PM.

**Minutes respectfully prepared and submitted by
Jini Fairley, ADA Coordinator and staff to COD.**

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***NEXT MEETING DATE: October 19, 2020**

Due to the Columbus Day Holiday, the COD meeting will be held on the third Monday of October

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.

**Newton Commission on Disability
CDBG Access Projects Report
September 14, 2020**

FY20 Park Pathway Installations – (CD20-03B; Budget: \$9,806.90; Expended: \$9,806.90; Balance: \$0) Installation of accessible pathways to park amenities (i.e. play structures) across the City. Locations are Auburndale Playground (The Cove), Weeks Field, and West Newton Common. **Project is closed.**

FY21 Curb Cut – (CD21-03C; Budget: \$71,442.33; Expended: \$0; Balance: \$71,442.33) Installation of curb cuts at the following intersections: Watertown Street and West Street, Watertown Street and Edinboro Street, Centre Street and Trowbridge Street. **Staff will be moving forward with Watertown/West Street and Watertown/Edinboro Street. DPW has submitted new cost estimates in which installations of curb cuts for the two abovementioned intersections totals to \$84,043.**

Phase I Marty Sender Pathway Installation – (CD21-03A; Budget: \$52,000; Expended: \$0; Balance: \$52,000) Reconstruction of the Marty Sender Trail with an accessible route, covering approximately ¼ mile of the trail. **Staff is preparing a MOA with Dept. of Parks, Recreation and Culture (PRC).**

McGrath Park Presentation for CDBG Idea:
McGrath Park - Accessible Path Proposal - COD 09.14.2020.pdf
Richard McGrath Park
Accessible Path
FY22 CDBG Project Proposal
Commission on Disability Meeting
September 14, 2020
25

Shift existing entrance on Myrtle to make accessible

38

39

40

41

42

43

44

45

46

Path to connect to existing entrance from Washington St.

Existing Accessible path from Washington St.

Ex. Accessible Parking

Proposed Path: .42 Miles

83

Total loop with existing sidewalk: .57 mile

Total Path Length: .42 Miles

Total estimated cost: \$50,800

A close up of a road next to a fence

Description automatically generated

A path with trees on the side of a road

Description automatically generated

There are three accessible parking spots with access aisles in between. In addition, there is a space with an "X" to maintain a clear space for accessible path entrance.

The accessible path runs along the edge of the parking lot on one side and the tennis court on the other side.

A close up of a fence

Description automatically generated

There is a fence entrance along Myrtle Street, but it is not currently aligned with the existing curb cut. This project will align the access point with this curb cut.

A large green field with trees in the background

Description automatically generated

View of McGrath Park with a view of the back of Warren House.

NEWTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

NEWTON COMMISSION ON DISABILITY

PARKING TICKET AND FINES REPORT

AUGUST 2020

TOTAL NUMBER OF TICKETS ISSUED	3
TOTAL VALUE OF TICKETS ISSUED	\$ 600.00
REDUCTION AMOUNT	\$ 200.00
TOTAL AMOUNT PAID	\$ 000.00
TOTAL OUTSTANDING	\$ 400.00

CODE # 26 ACCESSIBILITY SPOTS

NUMBER OF TICKETS ISSUED	2
TOTAL VALUE	\$ 400.00
REDUCTION AMOUNT	\$ 200.00
TOTAL AMOUNT PAID	\$ 000.00
TOTAL DUE	\$ 200.00

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 2021

As of August 31st, 2020

FY 2020 Year-to-date Parking Ticket Totals

TOTAL NUMBER OF TICKETS ISSUED	5
TOTAL VALUE OF TICKETS ISSUED	\$ 1,000.00
REDUCTION AMOUNT	\$ 200.00
TOTAL AMOUNT PAID	\$ 000.00
TOTAL OUTSTANDING	\$ 800.00

CODE # 26 ACCESSIBILITY SPOTS

NUMBER OF TICKETS ISSUED	4
TOTAL VALUE	\$ 800.00
REDUCTION AMOUNT	\$ 200.00
TOTAL AMOUNT PAID	\$ 000.00
TOTAL DUE	\$ 600.00

CODE # 27 CURB CUTS

NUMBER OF TICKETS ISSUED	1
TOTAL VALUE	\$ 200.00
REDUCTION AMOUNT	\$ 000.00
TOTAL AMOUNT PAID	\$ 000.00
TOTAL DUE	\$ 200.00

Treasurer's Report

Given by Jane Brown, Treasurer of the Commission On Disability
Presented at the September 14, 2020 COD Meeting
As of September 11, 2020, 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: \$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: \$29**0.00**

ADA COORDINATOR'S REPORT

Given by Jini Fairley, ADA/Section 504 Coordinator, and presented at the September 14, 2020 COD meeting.

Site Visits:

- **Newtonville Streetscape- visited several locations with Terry and Nick**
- **Watertown & Edinboro Intersection- with Tiffany, Alfredo, and John**
- **McGrath – walked a loop around fields with Tiffany & Luis**

Trainings:

- Webinars: Chapter 7 & Part 1 of Chapter 8 of ADA/ABA Standards
- Webinar- Digital Accessibility
- Webinar- Facecoverings and the ADA
- Webinar- Fair Housing 101 for Realtors
- IHCD Lunch&Learn- Inclusion and Black Lives Matter
- US Access Board Webinar- 30th ADA Anniversary
- Webinar- Covid19 & Return to Work
- Webinar- Covid19 & ADA Title II & Post-Secondary Implications

Meeting/Events/Conference Calls:

- Police Reform Task Force- attend weekly, one of several city staff resource to task forces
- MOD statewide virtual meeting
- Boston & BCIL Virtual 30th ADA Anniversary program
- Saturday Sidewalk Studios- Robert Solomon's chalk mural on carriage way- COD sponsored
- ADA Jeopardy-Newton's COD 30th ADA Anniversary on Zoom
- Gave presentation on Disclosure & Reasonable Accommodation to The Carroll Center for the Blind clients/job seekers
- "Crip Camp" screening & panel discussion- Boston Teachers Union
- Library - "Conversation with Professor Kendi" –arranged ASL and CC for virtual program
- Design Review Committee – for NewCAL
- CIP Steering Committee- with several departments
- NewCAL- every other week meeting
- Fair Housing Committee- I attend this monthly
- Complete Streets Committee & Road Paving- I attend every week
- CODA- monthly meeting- with other CODs' members and ADA Coordinators
- West Newton & Newtonville Streetscapes Working Group- every other week updates

Draft of Service Dogs Pamphlet:

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. Individuals with vision loss use guide dogs and 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, entrance ways, 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 benefit 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 for similar tasks and for stability.

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.

There are also dogs specifically trained for early detection of potentially life threatening symptoms for people with serious medical conditions. These alert dogs can, for example, help individuals with Seizure Disorder, diabetes, and autism. They're trained to preemptively notice the onset of an episode and ensure they get their required medicines or that they're in a safe space or position to prevent any injuries to themselves or others.

Another type of service dog is for individuals with Psychiatric needs, such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). These dogs are able to help their handlers 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 assistance animals 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 dog, 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

Commission on Disability member Matt Volpi writes: 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 with 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. Now that my daughter uses a wheelchair much of the time, her dog performs

even more helpful tasks.



How to approach someone with a service dog

Service dogs may be dogs, but they should also be regarded as a medical device or aid. 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 an 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>

To learn about how service dogs are protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act, visit https://www.ada.gov/regs2010/service_animal_qa.html

And to find out more about Canine Companions for Independence, visit <http://cci.org>