



Commission on Disabilities  
Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes

***May 3, 2023***

**Commissioners:** *indicate present (P) or absent (A)*

Laurie Berner - P

Ashlie Castaldo - P

Amanda Crosby - P

Allison Fochs - A

Dianne Naus - P

Samantha Smingler – P

Brooke Marinan - P

**Also present:** Human Rights Officer Carl Crawford, Officer Mark Bauer, Alexandra Fanavitch

Chair Amanda Crosby called the ***May 3rd, 2023*** Commission on Disabilities meeting to order at ***3:35pm***, there was a quorum.

**Approval of current agenda:**

\*Correction needed: next meeting will be on June 7, 2023

Motion: Commissioner Castaldo, All in favor.

**Approval of the Feb 2023 minutes:**

Motion: Commissioner Burner, 2nd by Commissioner Naus

**Public Comment/Information:** none at this time.

**Guest speakers or presentations:**

- Alexandra Fanavitch - introduced as Commissioner Castaldo's campaign manager
- Chair Crosby shared the Minnesota Inclusion Initiative Mini Grant
  - ARC and Human Services working together to offer micro grants to people with disabilities to work towards their goals.
  - <https://arcminnesota.org/ways-we-can-help/scholarships-microgrants/minnesota-microgrant-partnership/>

**Accessible Parking Update:**

- Officer Bauer received one request for West Duluth resident in the mailbox today, site review has not been complete
- After months of not being able to meet quorum at the parking commission, 3 applicants have stepped up for the open seats. This should help with future approvals of the backlog and today's application.
- Officer Bauer ensures no applicants wait longer than 2 weeks, even if quorum isn't met, and then a follow up is done when quorum is met.
- Officer Bauer confirms the current interpretation behind the accessible parking ordinance, is that someone with disabilities may ask for a mirrored parking spot. So that when alternate side parking is in effect, they have accessible parking every week.

**Parks and Rec Report:**

- Lakewalk interpretation plan is now up and open for public comment, submit comments by the end of May.
- Chair Crosby service on the Park and Rec Commission will be ending this year, so we need to consider which commissioner from the Disability Commission can represent us on the Parks and Rec next year.

## **Old Business:**

### Recruiting Commissioners

- Remind folks who would be great to apply for the open positions on our commission
- Can we have help from the city to push the openings on media - comms team should be contacted.
- City has not yet finalized if any commissions will be combined, may need to wait for that decision before getting promotional support.

## **Snow Removal Task Force**

- Current participants include: Ashlie, Laurie, Amanda, and Carl
- Working on a framework to create an outline of the knowledge already known by the folks involved (already 19 pages)
- To create a long term plan and make the most of available community and city resources
- Goal to start messaging for next year/education piece - transparent information on what is happening
- Presentations coming up from Jeff Hukavitch (Public Works), Jane Gittemire (Planning) Chris Beldon (DTA)
- Meeting every other Tuesday 10:30-noon, in person and virtual. Chair Crosby will send a calendar invite to those involved. But ask that all Commissioners continue to share ideas and feedback.

## **Commission Retreat, 2023 Planning Goals**

- This will be a special meeting, still an open meeting
- Goal is to select 1-2 main priorities for the rest of the year
- In the past brought up Margo from the cities, and participated in an event with the Chamber, and attended a Disability Commission event in the cities.
- Suggested time frame: August/September 3 hrs - Laura will send a doodle poll
- Review prior goals, and accomplishments
- Need a subcommittee for planning: Exec Board with Carl Crawford

Open Meeting Law - no update, Mr. Crawford is not expecting any changes from the state.

- Also pushback from party members with multiple jobs that can't make meetings, so an advantage to those with higher SES
- Michigan has changed their policy, so positive precedence is happening.

### **New Business:**

-The "R" word - several families in the ISD709 school district went to school administration to share concerns about bullying against their students who were being called the "R" word. Parents didn't get support from admin, who stated that the "R" word is not considered a slur.

- As a Commission, we strongly disagree with this stance, and Commissioner Castaldo has written a letter urging the ISD 709 school district to reeducate themselves and reconsider their approach since the "R" is clearly a slur and being used to cause harm.

- Mr. Crawford suggest sending the letter to the school board to be on an upcoming meeting agenda, School Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent

- It's felt that if we were to poll faculty and staff, we think they would agree it's an offense, they just don't have support from admin to enforce

- It's in the ISD 709 to not use discriminatory terms.

- Commissioner Berner shared that for decades we used to have lots of training in schools around disability, and the name calling got better, feels like things are coming back

- We will follow up by adding a list of resources ex.Going All In(clusive) and asking them to acknowledge they have received the letter...added to the end of the letter

Letter read by Commission Ashlie:

# Commission on Disabilities Anti-Bullying Statement

Bullying, slurs, harassment, and other demeaning behaviors are unacceptable within the ISD 709 community and do not display the values we hold within the Duluth community.

As a Commission, it has been brought to our attention that there have been reports of bullying due to disability status and the usage of the most prominent slur word attached to this protected class: “the R-word” within our school system. Thus, as a Commission of the City of Duluth, we want to emphasize that such language and behaviors are harmful and hurtful and go against not only the ISD 709 Bullying Prohibition Policy but also the stated goal of creating safe and welcoming spaces.

Children with physical and invisible disabilities alike strive to cultivate friendships and learn without undue hardship like their peers. It is up to all of us to create an academic culture where children are raised with acceptance.

Bullying is Intimidating, threatening, abusive, and harmful conduct that is objectively offensive and:

*\*Includes an actual or perceived imbalance of power between the students involved; or*

*\*The conduct is repeated or forms a pattern; or*

*\*Materially and substantially interferes with a student’s educational opportunities or performance or ability to participate in school functions or activities or receive school benefits, services, or privileges.*

Harassment is harmful comments or behavior, regardless of intent, toward someone because of and as it relates to their membership or perceived membership in a protected group. Protected groups are defined by state and federal law and include but are not limited to; sexual orientation, religion, race, national origin, color, sex, age, and disability.

Such examples can include:

- Verbal bullying is saying or writing mean things, and can include teasing, name-calling, and threatening;

- Physical bullying is hurting another person's body or belongings, and can include hitting, tripping, kicking, spitting, pushing, or taking and breaking someone's things;
- Social bullying is hurting someone's reputation or relationships. It can include spreading rumors, leaving someone out on purpose, demanding money or property, or scaring or threatening someone;
- Cyber-bullying is bullying that happens via things like cell phones, computers, or the Internet. It can include "sending, posting, or sharing harmful, untrue, or mean content about someone else

As a Commission, we believe it is important for our community, including ISD 709, to take up a renewed commitment to the inclusion and empowerment of all our youth, regardless of ability or disability status. If sensitivity training is needed/wanted, the Commission on Disabilities can provide local resources that can assist in this area.

Motion to approve with the additions listed: Commissioner Castaldo, 2nd: Commissioner Marinan, All: I, motion carries

**Announcements:**

- Tomorrow is Courage Kenny kids day for track and field, looking for volunteers

**Adjourn: 4:31pm Next meeting *June 7th*, 3:30 PM City Hall Room 430**